As-Sulamî

La scala di luce

Tre antichi testi di scuola malâmatî

a cura di Demetrio Giordani

Il leone verde

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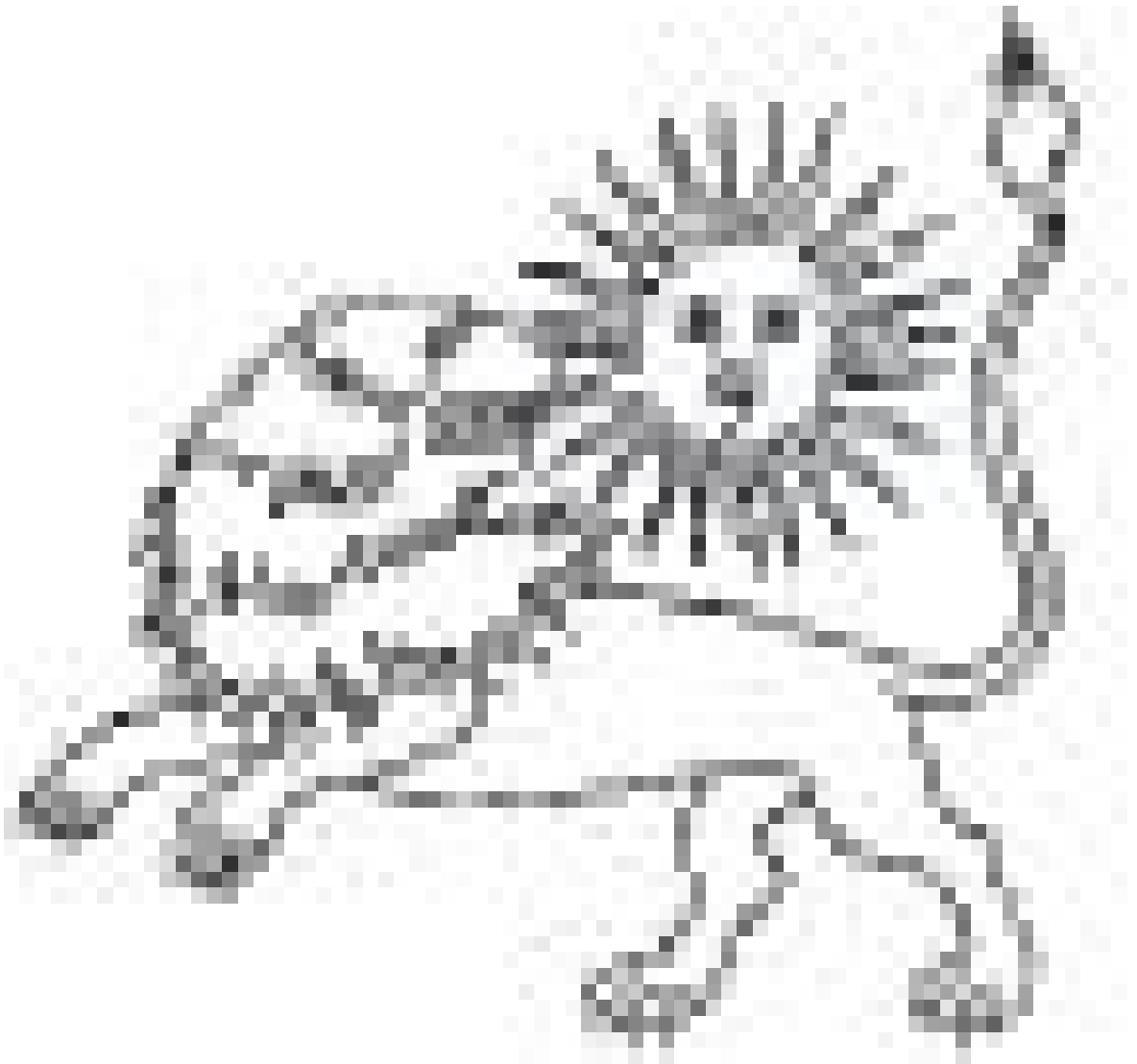

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On the cover: Glazed ceramic basin from the Church of S. Andrea in Pisa, – Spain, first quarter of the 12th century.

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INTRODUCTION

The Malamati of Nîshâpûr

When the Shaykh Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî (d.1021 AD) wrote his epistle on the Malâmatî (Risâla al-Malâmatîyya) a century and a half had already passed since the apparition, in one of the main cities of Khurâsân, the north-eastern region of Persia on the borders of Afghanistan, of that group of ascetics who immediately distinguished themselves for the practice of a spiritual path with extremely rigorous, "relentless" characteristics, someone would say today, who was given the name of "Way of Blame", quite distinct from the "Way of Sufism", which was instead the spiritual way of the ascetics of Baghdâd.

In fact, the activity of the first Malamatî began in the Persian city of Nîshâpûr between the 9th and 10th centuries AD, some say as a reaction to the religious environment of the time and to the ascetic practices in vogue in some Sufi circles of that city. During this period Nîshâpûr, together with that of Merv, Herat and Balkh, was one of the most important cities of Khurâsân, placed at the center of a crossroads of roads that connected it, on the one hand, to the main cities of the Islamic world of that time, Rayy and Baghdâd, and on the other to Mashhad, Samarkand, Bukhârâ, Central Asia and India.

During the reign of the Tâhîridi (820-873 AD) and the Samanids (10th century) Nîshâpûr was the capital of Khurâsân and the seat of the provincial government. During the period in which the Abbasid caliphate was subjected to the pressing tutelage of the Shiite Buwahidi dynasty (932-1055 AD), Nîshâpûr became the de facto center of Sunni Islam, at least until the middle of the eleventh

century, when the Seljuks, fervent Sunnis, settled there temporarily making it their capital, before definitively reconquering Baghdâd.

At that time Nîshâpûr was a densely populated city, made up of more than forty districts, and was a center of flourishing handicrafts, with two large markets. Its agriculture was prosperous mainly due to a sophisticated system of underground irrigation canals. The general prosperity of the city materialized in the formation of an influential middle class, made up of artisans, merchants, officials and religious scholars from the major legal schools of Khurâsân, so much so that Ibn Battuta called it "little Damascus", and celebrated in the chronicle of the during his trip the madâris and the crowd of students who had seen circulating there.

Already from the ninth century, however, the well-being of Nîshâpûr and the safety of its inhabitants were threatened by violent unrest of a sectarian nature which took place for the control of the main institutions of the city; these disorders especially involved those belonging to the Hanafite and Shafi'ite juridical schools in a crescendo of hostility. The antagonism between the two schools of law extended from theological and juridical disputes to the struggle for control of teaching in the madâris and of the judiciary, and finally gave rise to real pitched battles, which mobilized large sectors of the population in support from one party or the other. The riots also broke out in other cities of Khurasân; it seems, however, that in particular Nîshâpûr had been the city most affected by these upheavals, which were then the fundamental cause of the social and economic decline of the city around the twelfth century[1]. It is within this sectarian and partisan climate that the activities of the Malamati of Nîshâpûr began[2].

There are those who affirm that the spiritual method of the Malamati represents a decisive reaction against movements famous for their extremism which had an enormous influence in Khurasân around the ninth century; in particular, their energetic introspective discipline was in contrast with the extreme asceticism flaunted by the Karrâmiyya sect, which at that time had a great popular influence, especially among the poor weavers and craftsmen of the Mânishâk district, in the northern part West of the city. This sect was named after its founder Muhammad b. Karrâm (d. 869 AD) originally from Sîstân, and was a militant movement, with an almost monastic rule, and with doctrines often judged too literal[3].

The original group of the Malâmatî was formed among the artisans of the city and the most important news about it comes to us through Sulamî, who had been among the few to receive orally, from an unknown number of members of the third generation of Malâmatî, information on the life and the judgments of the group's founders and their disciples. Among these informants, about thirty characters[4], the name of Sulamî's grandfather clearly stands out, Abû 'Amr Ismâ'îl ibn Nujayd (d. 977 AD), who was part of the group of those who put into practice the malâmatî principle of “dissimulation of inner experience” (talbîs al-hâl)[5].

The first Malamatî of Nîshâpûr gathered around the figure of Hamdûn al-Qassâr (d.884 AD), who according to Sulamî was the true founder of the movement[6] and who is perhaps the representative of its most authentic tendency. Even if he left no written work, some of his most significant sayings are handed down. He said: «The knowledge that God has of you is better than that which men have» (bâyad ke tâ 'ilm-i Haqq – ta'âlâ – be-to nîkûtar az ân bâshad ke 'ilm-i khalq)[7].

Hamdûn argued that it was characteristic of human nature to be concerned with worldly popularity rather than pure divine pleasure, and that this was the greatest veil that came between God and godly man. Those who are concerned with the judgment of men - he said - avoid acting in a reprehensible way only to avoid attracting blame upon themselves; while those who care about God's judgment do not take into account what men say[8]. The avoidance of becoming famous because of one's religious piety, and therefore the concomitant danger of hypocrisy (riyâ'), made it essential for the Malamatî to disguise their supererogatory acts of worship: for them, pleasing men and pleasing God were in fact objectives irreconcilable and opposites. The Malamati had first of all to try not to argue with the people for what they said about him, nor to regret being criticized or despised, but rather to do everything to attract the blame of the people, without such an action being in itself a sin grave or an offence, but only an expedient to be rejected.

The emphasis on inner and secret devotion led the Malamatî to deliberately reject any form of distinctive dress, but also samâ'[9] gatherings, and even vocal dhikr[10], as an exemplary and public form of outward devotion.

Hujwîrî reports the following anecdote about Hamdûn al-Qassâr, who tells of his meeting with one of the leading exponents of the Futuwwa movement:

«One day, while walking along the course of the Hîra river in Nîshâpûr, I met Nûh al-'Ayyârî, known for his chivalrous virtue (futuwwa), who was at the head of a group of young knights ('ayyârân)[11] of the city. I saw him on the street and I said to him: “O Nûh, what is generosity (javânmardî) for you?” He said, "Which one,

my bounty or yours?" I said, "Tell me about both." He replied, “The bounty for me is that I take off this garment and put on the patched garment (muraqqa'a) and act appropriately to such garment, so that I may be a Sufi and abstain from sin for the shame I feel before to God. While for you generosity is that you remove the patched dress so that people do not deceive you and you do not deceive people. Consequently, my generosity is the formal observance of the revealed law, while for you it is keeping Reality in secret” (hefz-i haqîqat bar asrâr)»[12].

The desire to seek consideration in the opinion of others and the complacent self-esteem had experienced absolute sincerity (ikhlâs) as an antidote, which the Malamati adopted to ruthlessly unmask the tricks of the lower soul (nafs); said Dhû-l-Nûn the Egyptian, one of the first ascetics to whom a marked malâmatî tendency has always been attributed: «The nafs has a rosary and a Koran in her right hand, a scimitar and a dagger in her sleeve»[13].

The concept of blame (malâma) essentially derives its origin from a Koranic passage which mentions "the soul that blames itself" (al-nafs al-lawwâma) (Cor. 75: 2) and which we also find in the verse of the “Surah of the Table”:

"God will raise up people (qawm) whom He will love and who will love Him, humble with the believers and fair with the unbelievers, who will strive for the Cause of God and who fear no reproach from any blamer" (Cor. 5:54) .

The expression al-nafs al-lawwâma indicates an intermediate stage in the progression of the human soul towards its perfection, being in

the beginning nothing but the "soul that instigates evil" (al-nafs al-ammâra bi- l-sû'), eventually becoming the "pacified soul" (al-nafs al-mutma'inna). The sense of blame then, in the perspective of the Malâmati's own improvement, was both to expose oneself to the blame of others, but above all to blame that part of one's soul, "which instigates evil", preventing it from obtaining any satisfaction from things of this world.

In his work on Malamatîyya Sulamî he quotes the words of Muhammad ibn Mûsâ al-Wâsitî:

«Beware of the soul in every state; it is better that you get to submit to the point of greeting those who respond rudely to you and not do it with those who respond with kindness, not frequenting those who show pleasure in your company, inclining instead towards frequenting those who despise you, ask those who refuse you and not to those who give you satisfaction, turn to those who turn away and distance themselves from those who turn to you, give gifts to those who do not love you and not to those who love you, lodge with those who find you unpleasant and not lodge with those who want you, join those who hate you and not join those who love you, eat with those you dislike and not eat with those you want, travel when you want to stay and stay still when you want to travel»[14].

What we read in the treatise that the Shaykh al-Sulamî dedicated to the various diseases of the soul and their remedies fits clearly into the perspective of psychological correction typical of the malâmatî school, in which the aspirant is warned against the danger of hypocrisy, as in the following case:

«One of the diseases of the soul is the semblance of pity that the murîd assumes without requiring sincerity from the heart.

The corresponding remedy is for the murîd to abandon outward humility except to the extent that it reflects the inward humility of his heart and his secret interiority. For the Prophet – may God shower him with blessings and peace – said: “He who is pervaded by what he does not possess is like someone wearing stolen clothes”»[15].

«One of the diseases of the soul is that it favors its external appearance to be noticed, and neglects its internal reality which is instead under the gaze of God Most High.

The corresponding remedy is for the murîd to know with certainty that men honor him only according to what God has placed in their hearts; know, therefore, that his inner reality is the object of the gaze of God Most High, and this is therefore the first thing to correct, before one's external appearance, which is instead the object of the gaze of men. God Most High said: “For God is upon you that he watches you” (Cor. 4: 1). And the Prophet – may God shower him with blessings and peace – said: “Surely God does not look at your appearance or your actions, but instead looks at your hearts”»[16].

Another important character belonging to the original nucleus of the first Malamatî of Nîshâpûr was Abû Hafs al-Haddâd (d. 874 AD), a native of Kordâbâdh, a suburb on the outskirts of Nîshâpûr[17]. No writings of any kind have come from him either, but an innumerable series of sayings including: "Since I met Allâh, neither true nor false has entered my heart" (mâ dakhala qalbî haqq wa lâ bâtil mundhu ' araftu Allâh)[18].

It is said of him that, while sitting in his blacksmith shop at Nîshâpûr, listening to a blind old man reciting the Koran in the bazaar, he became so absorbed in hearing that he put his hand into the furnace and took out a red-hot piece of iron from the fire, without using tongs. Seeing all this his apprentice fainted[19].

Abû Hafs al-Haddâd was a disciple of Hamdûn and is to all intents and purposes one of the founders of the malâmatî movement, and despite this, a first, precise definition of "chivalric virtue" (futuwwa) dates back to him. It is said that one day, when Junayd of Baghdâd[20] was gathered together with other Sufis of his group, he asked Abû Hafs, who had gone to visit him, what futuwwa was, he invited him to define it himself, then Junayd said: «'For me Futuwwa consists in abolishing the view (of the ego) and breaking all bonds (of social consideration)'. “What you say is very beautiful,” replied Abû Hafs, but for me the futuwwa instead consists in acting justly without expecting to be treated justly”. (To this answer) Junayd said “Stand up (in honor of) our comrade! Abû Hafs surpassed (in the Futuwwa) Adam and all his descendants!”»[21].

There seems to have been a close relationship between the first Malâmatî and the members of the Futuwwa, the artisans who were members of restricted professional groups (asnâf), who, in addition to possessing the necessary requisites and skills of the trade, were bound by a code of ethical standards and initiatives that governed their lives and their work. This suggests that somehow the Malamati wanted to disguise their spiritual path under the membership of a professional organization like the Futuwwa; like them, the Malamati in fact wore the common dress of the bazaar, rejected the renunciation of work practiced by some Sufis and all practiced a trade, as revealed by some of their nicknames: al-Haddâd (the

blacksmith), al-Qassâr (the washerman) , al-Hajjâm (the bloodletter), al-Khayyât (the tailor) etc…

The Malamati had in common with the Fityâns, the "young" members of the Futuwwa, the principle and practice of îthâr, altruistic sacrifice, which had as its main foundation the verse: «And they prefer those to themselves even if afflicted with poverty » (Cor.59: 9)[22]. Precisely with regard to this verse, which Sulamî quotes recurrently in the texts translated in this book, Hujwîrî narrates an anecdote that exemplifies a malâmatî point of view on îthâr:

“I asked Ahmad Hammâdî of Sarakhs what had been the beginning of his conversion, he replied: 'Once I drove out of Sarakhs, took my camels into the desert and stayed there for a considerable period. I always wished to remain hungry and gave my portion of food to others, and God's words: “And they prefer those to themselves even though they are afflicted with want” (Cor. 59:9) were continually present in my mind and I firmly believed in the doctrines of the Sufis. One day a hungry lion came out of the desert, killed one of my camels, then retreated to high ground and roared. All the wild beasts around, hearing his roar, gathered around him. He tore the camel to pieces then returned to the high ground having eaten nothing. The other fairs – foxes, jackals, wolves, etc. – they began to eat and the lion waited until they left. Then he approached to bite a bite, but seeing a lame fox in the distance, he withdrew until the newcomer ate and was satisfied. After that he went forward and had a bite to eat. As he was about to leave he spoke to me, for I had observed from a distance, and said in pure and elegant language: 'O Ahmad, to give preference to others in food is an action befitting dogs: men give theirs. soul and their life' (yâ Ahmad, îthâr bar loqme kâr-i sagân ast, mardân jân va zendegânî îthâr konand). When this was clear to me, I

renounced all worldly affairs and this was the beginning of my conversion"»[23].

Abû 'Uthmân al-Hirî (d. 910 AD)[24], was the most important teacher of the group of Malâmatî of Nîshâpûr in the period between the year 883 and 910 AD He was born in Rayy, for a period of time he was a disciple of Shâh Shujâ' Kirmânî, remained with him until he accompanied him to visit Abû Hafs al-Haddâd, at Nîshâpûr, at which point he remained with the latter until the end of his life. Abû 'Uthmân al-Hirî was the teacher of Ismâ'îl ibn Nujayd, maternal grandfather and teacher of Sulamî. We owe him the introduction of the path of Sufism in Baghdâd in sick circles, so much so that Sulamî himself states: «From him the Way of Sufism spread in Nîshâpûr» (wa minhu intashara tarîqa al-tasawwuf bi-Naysâbûr)[25] .

Although it is by now established that Sûfî and Malâmatî are two terms that designate two different methods of spiritual realization, initially linked to the environments of Nîshâpûr and Baghdâd, the relations between the two groups were very intense; we can deduce from the biographical information collected by Sulamî in his Tabaqât that many characters in the tenth-century Sufism milieu moved from one center to another fî talab al-'ilm (in search of science) such as Abû Bakr al-Wâsitî[26], who became Khorasanian by adoption, or as Abû Hafs al-Haddâd, who, as we have just seen, from Nîshâpûr went to visit the most important of the Sufi circles in Baghdâd, that of Junayd.

It is important to note that after the death of Abû 'Uthmân al-Hirî, Nîshâpûr lost its central role in the Khurâsân and could no longer live up to its important past; many of Abû 'Uthmân's disciples followed other paths and headed elsewhere, such as 'Abd Allâh al-

Murta'ish al-Naysabûrî (d. 940 AD) who joined the Baghdâd group, or like Zujâjî (d. 959 AD), who also joined Nûrî and Junayd, and Ruwaym ibn Ahmad (d. 915 AD); or again Bûshanjî (d. 960 AD) who became a disciple of Ibn 'Atâ' and Jurayrî, Junayd's successor.

The Guardians of the Secret (al-umanâ')

At the time when Sulamî was writing his Risâla, the "Way of Blame", as understood by the first Malamatî, Hamdûn or Abû 'Uthmân, he had lost much of his intransigence, and this perhaps thanks to the close contacts with the 'Sufi environment of Baghdâd; while, due to the transformative influence of the malâma, the Sufi milieu had by contrast assumed a more rigorous attitude. The fact is that both Sulamî and his Khurasanian predecessors, Sarrâj and Kalâbâdhî, preferred to designate all the great personalities of the 10th and 11th centuries generically as Sufis, no longer taking into account the differences that initially distinguished them[27]. From then on there was no more talk of a proper Malâmati school distinct from the mainstream of Sufism; if anything, an allusion will be made to a more or less marked tendency in some historical orders of Sufism, such as for example the Bektashiyya, the Naqshbandiyya or the Tijâniyya, in certain areas of the Islamic world. There was then, in the literature of Sufism after the 11th century, particular attention was paid to defining the spiritual condition of the category of the Malâmatî, starting with Hujwîrî (d.1072), who in the chapter of his book dedicated to the malâma wrote:

«In particular, these people (în tâyefe) stand out over all creatures in the universe for having chosen to be blamed for the sake of their soul (del); this high degree has not been attained by any creature, neither by close ones (moqarrabân), nor by Cherubim (karrubiyân), nor by any other spiritual being (rûhâniyân), nor has it been attained by ascetics, devotees, nobles belonging to the nations of the antiquity; it is reserved for a certain group of this nation who follow the road (tarîq) of heart abstention (from the things of this world)»[28].

But it is above all Muhyî-l-Dîn Ibn 'Arabî who classifies the rank, attributes and function of the Malamati. In the long chapter LXXIII of his Futûhât, dedicated to the thirty-five Tabaqât al-awliyâ', the "Categories of Saints", the Shaykh al-Akbar describes the occult hierarchy of Muslim saints, which works secretly on the basis of the divine mandate, starting from the top , from the rank of the "Poles" (aqtâb), gradually descending to the two Imâms, the four Awtâds, the seven Abdâls, etc. up to three hundred Âdamiyyûn, the largest category[29]. At the beginning of the second part of this chapter, Shaykh al-Akbar speaks of the Malâmiyyas describing them as the highest rank in the hierarchy of Muslim saints. They are, according to him:

«The nobles among the men of the people of the Way of Allâh and their guides (a'immatuhum). The prince of the Universe, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, is part of their group. They are the wise ones who put things where they belong. They affirm the existence of secondary causes (asbâb) where it is convenient to do so, and deny their existence where they must be denied. They neglect nothing that God has ordained in His creation, in what they order. What belongs to this world they leave to this world, and they leave to the Other what belongs to the Other. They observe things with the gaze with which God observes them… The Malâmiyya (are those) whose value is hidden, which only their Lord knows»[30].

Among the categories of saints who belong to the higher degrees of the initiatory hierarchy, listed in the chapter of the Futûhât, there are two who have important affinities with the Malâmatî, who are the Afrâd, "the Solitary", and the Umanâ', "the Men of Confidence (of God)". The Afrâd are external to the jurisdiction of the Pole. They are among men like the Cherubim (karûbiyyûn) among the celestial

spirits, their station is that of the "free prophecy" (nubuwwa mutlaqa) or "general" (nubuwwa 'âmma), which is the intermediate station between the station of the " confirmation of the truth", the siddiqiyya, proper to Abû Bakr al-Siddîq, and the station of the "legislative prophecy" (nubuwwat al-tashrî'). About the existence of this intermediate station - explains Ibn 'Arabî - most of the people (of the tasawwuf) are unaware[31].

The Umanâ' are, in particular: «The greatest among the Malâmatiyya and the elite among them. Their spiritual states are not known, because they behave in the midst of creatures in accordance with what faith requires in an ordinary way... Their eminent rank will appear to creatures on the day of the Resurrection, while in this lower world they go around ignored among men »[32]. Also belongs to the category of "Men of Confidence" al-Khidr, the initiator of Ibn 'Arabî and of many chosen among the Sufis, who is described in the Koran as the spiritual instructor of Moses and as:

"One of Our servants to whom We had given mercy on Our part and taught him of Our secret science (min ladunnâ 'ilman)" (Cor. 18: 65).

It is precisely they, the Umanâ' - according to Ibn 'Arabî - who hold the deposit of divine trust (amâna) that God first proposed to heaven and earth, as the Koran recounts:

«We have proposed the pledge to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains, but they refused to take it and were afraid of it. But Man took charge of it, and man is an oppressor and an ignoramus"[33] (Cor. 23:72).

The station that belongs to these categories of saints is the Station of proximity (maqâm al-qurba), and it is for this reason that one of the names given to the Afrâd is precisely "the Close Ones" (muqarrabûn). It is the station of al-Khidr and of the secret science "which proceeds from God" (al-'ilm al-ladunnî); it is the station in which Muhyî-l-Dîn Ibn 'Arabî also entered, accessing the summit of Holiness, but finding no one there, he was seized by bewilderment and loneliness (infirâd), so that, to relieve him from the state of agitation that had seized him, God sent him a companion and a guide:

«The shadow of a person suddenly appeared to me. I got out of bed and walked towards him hoping to find comfort next to him; he embraced me, I observed him and I recognized the Shaykh Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî, whose spirit had taken on a bodily form and God had sent it out of mercy towards me»[34].

The fact remains that the "Via del Biasimo" must be considered as a spiritual attitude and not as a real and proper organized school; in other words, it can be spoken of as a mashrab and not a tarîqa[35], and as such it emerges in different ways, in places and times that are also very different from each other. In particular, it has been found that malâmatî tendencies were widespread in Bukhârâ, even before the time of Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband (d.1389 AD)[36]. The chain of initiatory transmission (silsila) of the masters of the Naqshbandiyya does not contain names that can be directly related to the Malamatî of Nîshâpûr, however it does contain the names of Bayazîd Bistâmî and Salmân al-Fârisî who are indicated by many for their spiritual temperament like the Malamati; moreover the connecting link of the silsila of the Naqshbandî with the Prophet is Abû Bakr (and not 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib as he is in most cases), so it is also for the silsila of the malâmati group of Nîshâpûr. From this fact, in particular, would also

derive one of the characteristics in common between the Tarîqa naqshbandiyya and the first Malâmatî, which is the silent invocation of the Name of Allâh (dhikr-i khafî) which according to tradition, the Prophet taught Abû Bakr in the cave of Mount Thawr, on the night of the migration (hijra) from Mecca to Medina. The practice of silent dhikr was also elaborated by the Malamati in detail; the Shaykh al-Sulamî, gives a description of it in four consecutive levels: with the tongue, with the heart, with the "secret" and with the spirit, the first of which, the dhikr "with the tongue", aloud, represents the initial and most external form of this practice[37].

Another resemblance between the Naqshbandî and the first Malamatî is their common attitude towards samâ' and other manifestations of external ritual linked to hearing sacred music; in this regard Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband said, with a play on words: "We do not practice it and we do not condemn it" (mâ na ân kâr mîkonîm, na inkâr mîkonîm).[38] The Shaykh al-Sulamî tells us a saying of a Malamati who had been asked why he did not participate in ritual hearings (samâ'), and he had given the following answer: «We do not abstain from ritual hearings because we do not like them or because we disapprove of them, but because we fear that states that we keep hidden»[39].

In addition to the similarities on the level of spiritual principles, we can speak of a common social orientation of the Malamati and the first Naqshbandî: both in fact were linked to the artisans and traders of the bazaar. We have seen previously how the Malamatî movement originated within the trade guilds (asnâf) of Nîshâpûr and the socio-ethical organization of the Futuwwa, and we can similarly imagine that this also happened for the Naqshbandî of Bukhârâ, judging by the large number of artisans and traders present in the group of disciples of Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband. We also know that in Central Asia, in the post-Timurid period, the trade guilds were

simultaneously linked to the Futuwwa and the Naqshbandî order; this can be better understood if we consider that both traditions count, in their spiritual genealogy (silsila), Salmân al-Fârisî and Ja'far al-Sâdiq[40].

The Ottoman Empire is another area of the Islamic world where the malâmatî attitude resurfaced in the 15th century, having been picked up by the Bayrâmiyya, an Anatolian brotherhood founded by Hajjî Bayrâm Velî (d. 1429), whose mausoleum is today in Ankara. One of the characteristics of the order was the absence and refusal of any external distinctive element, above all, it is said, due to the persecutions to which they were occasionally subjected, deriving from the accusations of heresy and conspiracy against the State, on the basis of which some some masters of the Hamzawî branch of the order were executed. An evident malâmatî nuance of Bayrâmiyya, present in some writings, is the exhortation to the disciples not to make the doctrines of the order known to the "ignorant", that is, to the non-initiated, which coincides with the practical intention of escaping in some way to religious persecution by the Ottoman authorities.

The Melâmî-Bayrâmî gradually spread throughout Anatolia, but their lack of interest in the external and public dimension meant that the brotherhood never had a great development. At the end of the 19th century, in Istanbul, at a time when the great brotherhoods numbered several dozen convents, the Bayrâmiyya owned only a few. Muhammad Nûr al-'Arabî (d. 1888), one of the last important masters of the melâmî tradition in the Ottoman environment, spread the principles of the brotherhood in Macedonia and the Balkans. The repression of Kemal Ataturk's regime did not completely prevent the continuation of order, and it is still possible today to trace numerous tekke nominally belonging to the melâmî tradition in Istanbul, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia[41].

In the literature on Sufism of the Indian sub-continent the term malâmatî is always flanked or completely assimilated to the synonym of Persian origin bê-shar' (bî-shar'), translatable with "heterodox", which generally applies to those orders from a wide range of "illegal" behaviors, such as the consumption of hashîsh, nomadism, the breaking of social ties, begging and the scarce adherence to religious precepts, due to which the members of these particular orders are rejected to the margins of the religious and social life of the Muslim community. This category includes minor Sufi orders such as that of the Madârî, wanderers and beggars, the Malang with a shaved head and dressed in black, devotees of the saint Lal Shâhbâz Qalandar (d. 1323), also called Malâmatî , whose mausoleum is in Sehwan in southern Pakistan. All these orders are disapproved in various ways by the members of the large orthodox and "respectable" (bâ-shar') orders of India and Pakistan, such as the Chishtiyya, the Naqshbandiyya, the Qâdiriyya, who are generally hostile to the eccentric behaviors of this kind of devotees. This separation also occurs at the social level: the members of the bâ-shar' orders are historically at the top of the Islamic society of the Indian sub-continent, while the members of the bêshar' orders are placed in society in a subordinate role, and play in the religious environment the more marginal and humble roles, such as that of the care of cemeteries[42].

It must be noted, however, that these two realities have never remained completely distinct and incompatible. It is an established fact that some masters of the Naqshbandiyya-mujaddidiyya, undoubtedly one of the most orthodox orders in this context, at a certain point became "guarantors" of the bê-shar' orders, aggregating them to their order by means of an initiatory assimilation , starting with Shâh Ahmad Sirhindî (d. 1624) who was simultaneously initiated into the Chishtiyya, Madâriyya and Qalandariyya, by his father, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ahad, who in turn had

been initiated into these orders by Rukn al -Dîn, son of the famous chishtî saint 'Abd al-Quddûs Gangôhî (d. 1537 AD). After Shâh Ahmad Sirhindî, the initiation into Qalandariya and Madâriyya, whose transmission path (silsila), it is important to note, originates from Abû Bakr al-Siddîq like the naqshbandî one, is handed down uninterruptedly within the order through his most important successors[43].

Finally, in the West of the Islamic world, the malâmatî tendency reappears in recent times in one of the most important orders in the Arab world. Sîdî Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Mukhtâr al-Tijânî, who died in Fès in 1815, had initially been initiated into the Qâdiriyya, the Shâdhiliyya and the Khalwatiyya, but in 1872 he had a waking vision of the Prophet Muhammad who entrusted him with the mission of founding a his own tariqa. The new order soon spread throughout West Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, and the eastern Arab world. Sîdî Ahmad al-Tijânî claimed the two highest ranks of the hierarchy of Muslim saints, as defined by Ibn 'Arabî: that of the Qutb al-aqtâb (the Pole of Poles) and that of the Khatm al-awliyâ' (the Seal of saints), which the Shaykh al-Tijânî will most often designate with the term Qutb al-maktûm (the hidden Pole)[44]. Even if there has been no historical contact with traditional malâmatî circles, nevertheless the Tijâniyya openly claims its own malâmatî disposition, as is also clearly stated in the writing of one of the companions of the founder of the order:

"Our brother and lord, the distinguished sharîf, the devoted walî, mawlânâ Muhammad ibn Abû-l-Nasr al-'Alawî, one of the chosen companions of our Shaykh (sîdî Ahmad al-Tijânî) often told us: " The initiatory states of the majority of the people of our tarîqa conform to those of the Malâmatiyya", and this is evident insofar as it is in agreement with the description given by (Ibn 'Arabî) al-Hâtimî. This is what one of our comrades, one of the eminent personalities and

one of the pillars of the tarîqa (sîdî Muhammad al-Kansûsî), also explicitly stated in his Jawâb al-muskit, where he gives, among other descriptions concerning them, the following: “They make no claim, no prerogative, no special virtue whatsoever, nor do they distinguish themselves from any craftsman engaged in his trade, or from any professional intent on his work, although among them there are individuals who, by virtue of their initiatory states and not of special operative means nor of (particular) innate gifts, have the power to act on beings and things (yatasarrafûna fî-l-kawn). They are undoubtedly the Malâmatiyya, whose head is the virtuoso par excellence, sayyidinâ Abû Bakr al-Siddîq”»[45].

La vita e le opere dello Shaykh Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami.

He was born in Nîshâpûr in 937 and died in the same city in 1021 AD. He was brought up in a high-ranking family of Arab stock, descended from the tribe of the Azd on his father's side and the Sulaym on his mother's side. His father, who moved to Mecca, entrusted the young man to his maternal grandfather Abû 'Amr Ismâ'îl ibn Nujayd, an eminent scholar of Hadîth of the Shafî'ite school and, as has already been reported, a disciple of Abû 'Uthmân al-Hirî. Sulamî received his legal training from a friend of his grandfather, the Hanafi judge Muhammad ibn Sulaymân al-Su'lûkî (d. 980 AD) who, after instructing him, awarded him a diploma (ijâza) and authorization to teach. He was initiated into Sufism and then received the Sufi robe (khirqa) from Abû al-Qâsim al-Nasrâbâdhî (d. 978 AD), who in turn had received it from Abû Bakr al-Shîblî some time earlier in Baghdâd.

Like many scholars of Hadîth, Sulamî traveled extensively in Khurâsân and 'Irâq in search of knowledge; he visited Merv and Baghdâd, and his travels culminated in the pilgrimage to the holy places which he undertook in 977 in the company of Nasrâbâdhî. Later he also traveled to the Hijâz. When he returned to Nîshâpûr his grandfather had died and bequeathed him his great library; he transformed it into a zawiya located in the neighborhood where he lived. For the next forty years he remained in his city, perhaps moving for short periods to Baghdâd. In the last years of his life he became known throughout Khurâsân as a learned Shafî'ite jurist and was respected as a Sufi master, author of manuals and compiler of hagiographies.

Sulamî was a very prolific writer, Muhammad ibn 'Alî al-Khashshâb (d. 1064 AD), his chief biographer, composed a long list of his works which amount to more than a hundred, written over a period of about fifty years, ranging from 970 to his death. Some of these works are still manuscripts, while others have been recently printed, some finally translated into Western languages and can be grouped into three main categories: biographies of great Sufis, commentaries on the Koran, treatises on the tradition of Sufism in the form of instruction to the disciples[46].

In addition to being an author of original production, Sulamî was also and above all a compiler, a collector of anecdotes and sentences of great Sufis; he collected all this material during his travels: in Merv, Baghdâd, Mecca, as well as in Nîshâpûr. So important and meticulous was his work, for the transmission of the oral tradition of Sufism of the first centuries, that often the sentences reported by him reappear, even after a considerable distance of time, in the works of important authors such as Abû al-Qâsim al- Qushayrî who was his main disciple, Rûzbehân Baqlî of Shîrâz, Abû Hafs 'Umar Suhrawardî, Muhyî-l-Dîn Ibn 'Arabî.

The method of collecting and copying is the main feature of many of his most famous works. The most important hagiographic work of Sulamî are undoubtedly the Tabaqât al-sûfiyya, the "Categories of Sufis", the first of its kind, containing one hundred and five biographies of Sufi characters, accompanied by a selection of their most indicative sentences; it is perhaps the abbreviated version of a much larger work, the Tâ'rîkh al-sûfiyya, which contained the lives of about a thousand characters, but which has been lost. There are currently two editions of the Tabaqât, the first edited by J. Pedersen (Leiden 1960), the other edited by Nûr al-Dîn Sharîba (Cairo 1969).

The method of editing the Tabaqât is the same used for the editing of the Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, the commentary on the Koran which was recently published in two volumes in Lebanon[47], of which forty-four manuscripts were already known, mostly kept in libraries Turkish[48]. It is a selection of about three thousand Koranic verses accompanied by about twelve thousand interpretative sentences, two thirds of which are cited with reference to the approximately one hundred authors who lived between the eighth and tenth centuries AD. C., the rest are anonymous. In this exegetical work, Sulamî combined the interpretative comments of the verses from written sources, which represent the main material of the commentary, with the aqwâl, sentences and sayings of famous Sufi characters; however, he excluded anecdotes and hagiographic stories, and comments typical of traditional legal, philological or theological-speculative exegesis.

Alongside this main commentary a secondary one entitled Ziyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr[49] has recently been discovered, compiled around AD 980, some time after the Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr. In this supplement Sulamî proposes unchanged his composite method of collecting Sufi sayings and Koranic glosses, and is therefore to be considered as the concluding phase of a single work of exegesis. Unlike the Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, which were completed when most of the material had already been collected by the author, the Ziyâdât were probably made when Sulamî had collected a further, significant amount of material, coming from from the same sources.

Throughout his exegetical work he gathered those interpretative terms in accordance with: «The understanding of the divine discourse based on the language of the People of the Essential Reality» (fahm khitâbihi 'alâ lisân ahl al-haqîqa)[50]. The method adopted by Sulamî derives from a fundamental assumption, namely that "the People of Essential Reality" had the privilege of understanding the secrets of divine revelation and the subtleties

(latâ'if) hidden in the Holy Book; and it is for this reason that those to whom these Realities (haqâ'iq) have been revealed make them known in turn by means of "allusions" (ishârât).

Sulamî's work will inspire others who, following his example, will later adopt his method and will also make use of his own material for the drafting of other important commentaries, such as that of Rûzbehân Baqlî of Shirâz and that of Qushayrî[51].

The main written sources from which Sulamî drew for the drafting of his Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr are above all the commentaries by Abû al-'Abbâs al-Adamî, better known as Ibn 'Atâ', by Abû Bakr Muhammad ibn Mûsâ al- Wâsitî, known as Ibn al-Farghânî, of Sahl al-Tustarî,[52] and the sixth Shi'ite Imâm Ja'far al-Sâdiq. One of the most complex issues concerning the sources of Sulamî is precisely the presence, in the work of commentary on the Koran by a rigorously Sunni author, of all those parts that are attributed to one of the main authorities of Shiism, above all because, some say, the material that has converged in the pages of the Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr has little correspondence in the commentaries which in the traditional Shiite environment are directly or indirectly attributed to the sixth Imâm[53].

Among the most significant comments of Imâm Ja'far, which Sulamî reports in his tafsîr, is that relating to Moses' dialogue with the burning bush contained in the sura Ta-Ha.

«And when he came to the fire we called him: Moses! Verily I am your Lord (Innî Anâ Rabbuka)" (Cor. 20: 11-12), Ja'far explains: "Moses was asked - peace be upon him -: "How did you know that the call came from God (al-Haqq)?" He replied: Because He annihilated me

and submerged me, to the point that each of my hairs was as if challenged by a call coming from all directions, and it was as if an answer came from that same call. When I was engulfed in the lights of the Majesty, surrounded on all sides by the lights of Power and of the Jabarût, I knew that I had been called of God. And since the first word of the call was "I", followed by "I am", I understood that it belongs to no one but God to speak of himself using these two words joined together, one after the other. I was seized by astonishment (dahsh) and that was the moment of annihilation (fanâ'). I said then: "You are He who is and will be forever, there is no longer a place beside you for Moses, nor will he have the audacity to speak to You, unless You make him subsist by Your subsistence (baqâ') and do not give it Your attribute (na't). You will then be the questioner and the questioned one". He replied: "No one else but Me can support My speech, no one can give Me an answer; I am the one who speaks and the one who is spoken to, and you are only an appearance (shabah) in the middle, where the place of speech is»[54].

Another example of Ja'far al-Sâdiq's particular exegetical procedure is that relating to the tenth verse and the Sura of the Star (sûra al-najm) in which the ascent (mi'râj) of the Prophet Muhammad is narrated:

"'And he revealed to His servant what he revealed' (Cor. 53:10). Ja'far said: without any intermediary between the two, (and this happened) secretly in (Muhammad's) heart, without anyone else knowing about it…

Ja'far al-Sâdiq then said about the verse "he descended hanging in the air" (Cor. 53: 8), which means: when the beloved (from God) came as close as possible to his Beloved (at -habîb min al-habîb),

veneration (for the divine Majesty) reached its peak. For this reason God treated him with the utmost kindness, since extreme veneration is not bearable without extreme lovingkindness. So His words: “And He revealed to His servant what He revealed” means: it was what it was and what happened happened; the Beloved said what a loved one says to his beloved, and showed him the affection that a loved one shows to his beloved, and confided to him what a loved one confides to his beloved. So they hid and did not divulge their secret to anyone else; for this He says "And he revealed to His servant what He revealed", no one knows this revelation except He who revealed it, and he to whom it was revealed»[55].

With regard to the third and last genre of works written by the Shaykh Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî, most of them are manuals dedicated in a general sense to the instruction of the disciples, or writings on particular aspects of the tradition of Sufism; the best known of these is undoubtedly al-Risâla al-Malâmatiyya (the epistle of the "People of the Blame"), the only treatise that has ever been explicitly dedicated to this subject, in which the principles of the Malâma are expounded through the allusions and sentences of important characters of Sufism collected by Sulamî with the method described above. Also belonging to this genre are al-Muqaddima fî-l-tasawwuf (the Introduction to Sufism)[56] and the Kitâb al-Futuwwa (the Book of Chivalry)[57], two epistles which refer to as many distinct ways of spiritual attainment.

Particularly indicative, even if it has never been translated into Western language, is a short collection of hadîth entitled: Kitâb al-arba'în fî-l-tasawwuf (the Book of forty ahâdîth on Sufism)[58] in which are listed and commented by Sulamî forty prophetic sentences accompanied by their isnâd, the chain of transmitters coming from the Prophet. The most interesting thing is that the isnâd of each hadîth begins with the expression akhbaranâ (he communicated to

us), which is the characteristic formula of the reception of information that took place with the usual method of transmission of traditional science (tahammul al- 'film); this confirms that the Shaykh al-Sulamî was not only an expert connoisseur, but was himself a link in the transmission of this science. The specific feature of the book is that in each chapter, each individual hadîth supports a particular doctrinal principle of Sufism.

As for the series of treatises that Sulamî wrote to illustrate the characteristics of the path, from these we can deduce his formative action as a guide (murshid) of the aspirants. Many of these are short works that have the function of synthetically describing to the aspirants the different stages of the path of men of inner knowledge, the conduct to be adopted with companions and teachers, the pitfalls that the lower soul tends to the aspirant during the journey and the corresponding remedy, according to the characteristic orientation of the Nîshâpûr school of masters.

Three of these works are proposed here in Italian translation; they are short treatises which were written by Sulamî most probably in the period from 970 AD onwards, after he settled permanently in Nîshâpûr at the end of his travels, and they have all been published in the collections: Tis'a kutub li-Abî 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn al-Husayn ibn Mûsâ al-Sulamî (Ankara 1981); and Tis'a kutub fî usûl al-tasawwuf li-Abî 'Abd al-Rahmân Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Mûsâ al-Sulamî (Beirut 1993) edited by Sulaymân Ates.

In the first of the three, the Manâhij al-'ârifîn, (the Ways of the Gnostics), the crossing of the stations during the initiatory process (minhaj pl. manâhij) of the aspirant (murîd), from the Station of repentance (maqâm al -tawba), up to the Station of freedom, (or

rather of the "liberation", maqâm al-hurriyya), which is the proper Station of the "Guardians of the secret" (al-umanâ'), which, as we have seen, they represent the elite among the Malamati. Then the descent from this elevated station towards the creatures, and the return among the common people with the mission of announcing and calling to God (da'wa). A detail that allows the work to be placed with certainty in the malâmatî vein is the constant reference to Abû Bakr al-Siddîq, who is indicated here as the perfect model of this particular path.

In a passage of the treatise dedicated to spiritual poverty (faqîr), Sulamî distinguishes between patient renunciation or simple deprivation of possessions, which is the external form of being poor (faqîr), and total detachment from the world, which instead is reality depth of Poverty, which coincides with the perfect indifference of the one to whom "neither the abundance of goods nor their scarcity harms" and which leads to the unconditional acceptance of the will of the Creator, in every situation. Perhaps this is the detail that reveals that thin line of distinction that Sulamî and his masters wanted to draw against a superficial asceticism, boasted by many of the ascetics of the time, Karramiyya or others, towards whom they harbored a strong distrust.

The second of the treatises, called Mas'ala darajât al-sâdiqîn, or the "Treatise on the stages of the way of real men", describes a path in a similar form to the previous one, since it lists the stages of the aspirant's spiritual development in progression, but which differ profoundly in the details, definitions and content of the stations. Here Sulamî defines true knowledge as the negation of all that is not the true object of knowing, which is, therefore, also the negation of all that the aspirant has known along the way. True knowledge - says Sulamî - is that which comes from God (al-'ilm al-ladunnî) which is a secret that God shares only with those who are worthy of His trust

(al-umanâ'); it makes aware of the hidden Reality (ghayb) and allows to know the events before they manifest themselves. It is that particular knowledge that al-Khidr confides to Moses in the "Sura of the Cave" (Cor. 18: 60-82); it is thanks to this science that Abû Bakr is able to clearly see the sex of the child in the womb of his partner.

Finally - Sulamî writes at the end of the treatise - when God has led the wayfarer to the end of his journey, he arrives in the Station of closest proximity (maqâm al-qurba) to Him, and of the maximum distance from creation. From there He will make it descend again by showing its external reality to men to give them a model and a sign of His Mercy, however concealing its true identity and jealously keeping its internal condition to itself. He will live among men as one of them, without anyone perceiving his state of inner perfection. All this corresponds perfectly to what has been said up to now about the condition of the Malamati.

Finally, the Bayân ahwâl al-sûfiyya (the Exposition of the spiritual states of the Sufis) is perhaps the simplest text, in which Sulamî briefly illustrates the characteristics of the Sufi way, listing the obligations of poverty (faqr), the rules of good spiritual conduct (adab), stations (maqâmât) and spiritual states (ahwâl). The importance of this treatise, on the other hand, lies in the clues which allow us to define precisely what according to him is the true origin of Sufism, and which invariably allow us to identify the first Sufîs in the group of ascetics called "the People of the Veranda", of whom they included the poorest of the Meccan emigrants.

According to Sulamî they are described in this verse of the Koran: «Let the booty also be distributed to poor emigrants (lil-fuqarâ' al-muhâjirîn) who have been expelled from their homes and

possessions, because they sought God's favor and His satisfaction, and they rushed to the aid of God and His Messenger. It is they who are truly truthful!" (Cor. 59:8).

Of them, as poor (fuqarâ'), we also speak in this verse:

"And you will give to those poor people who are so committed to God's way that they cannot walk the earth to trade. The ignorant consider them rich, for their dignified modesty, while you will recognize them by the sign that distinguishes them: they do not ask people insistently" (Cor. 2: 273).

Finally, it should be noted that Sulamî often quotes, in this and in the other two treatises, a Koranic passage which refers to an ascertained episode, that of the visit to Muhammad by two important dignitaries of an Arab tribe, who claimed, given their humble condition of his companions, among them many of the "People of the Veranda", that the Prophet should abandon their company to join them. It was then that, according to Sulamî and other commentators, the verse was revealed: "Do not reject those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, for the desire of His countenance" (Cor. 6: 52). This would be a confirmation that the leader of that first group of fuqarâ' in the history of Islam was none other than the Prophet himself.

Demetrius Giordani

The words indicated in round brackets have been added to allow a better understanding of the text; moreover, those parts of the

Koranic verses and of the ahâdîth which do not appear in the original text have been added in square brackets.

I would like to thank Paolo Urizzi for having encouraged me in various ways to study the work of this great master. I also thank Lodovico Zamboni for his contribution.

[1] See IM Lapidus, History of Islamic Societies, vol. I, The origins of Islâm, Turin 1993, pp. 178-180. See also W. Madelung, “The Spread of Mâtûrîdism and the Turks” in: Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam, London 1985, II, pp. 109-168.

[2] S. Sviri, “Hakîm al-Tirmidhî and the Malâmatî Movement” in: The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. I, Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rûmî (700–1300), a cura di L. Lewisohn, Oxford 1999, p. 586.

[3] S. Sviri, “Hakîm al-Tirmidhî and the Malâmatî Movement”, pp. 600-601. See also entry Karrâmiyya in EI^2 (CE Bosworth). One of the few traditional sources that reports some news on the movement is Tâj al-Dîn al-Subkî which summarily describes Ibn Karrâm always surrounded by a group of fuqarâ' (pl. of faqîr, lit. "poor", an expression used to designate who is initiated into the spiritual path), who dressed in a colored and unstitched sheepskin, wore a headgear called qalansuwwa, and preached standing on a market stall; see Subkî, Tabaqât al-Shâfî'iyya, Cairo 1964 vol. II, pp. 304-305. Hujwîrî describes in a famous anecdote the personality of Ahmad b. Harb (d.849) one of the teachers of Muhammad b. Karrâm: «One day when he was sitting in the company of some chiefs and nobles of Nîshâpûr who had gone to greet him, it happened that his son, who had been drinking, entered the room, drunk, singing and playing a guitar, and passed among them rudely, not paying attention to anyone. Ahmad, who had sensed their bewilderment, said: "Why on earth are you indignant?" They replied, "We are sorry that this boy comes to your presence in this state." Ahmad said, “You have to forgive him. One night my wife and I ate some food that had been brought to us from a neighbor's house. The same night this son was conceived, we fell asleep and forgot our devotions. The following day we inquired from

our neighbor about the source of the food he had sent us, and found that it came from the wedding party in the house of an official of the sultan'" (Hujwîrî, Kashf al-mahjûb, Tehran 1383 H.sh., pp. 536-537. English translation: The Kashf al-mahjûb, the oldest Persian tratise on Sufiism, edited by RA Nicholson, Lahore 1976, henceforth the reference edition, pp. 365-366) .

[4] Regarding the names of others who transmitted news to Sulamî, see R. Deladrière, "Les Premiers Malâmatiyya: les 'Gardiens du Secret' (al-'umanâ')", in: Melamis-Bayramis. Studies on three Muslim mystical movements, edited by N. Clayer, A. Popovich, Th. Zarcone, Istanbul 1998, pp. 2-3.

[5] On Ibn Nujayd see Sulamî, Tabaqât al-Sûfiyya, Il Cairo 1997, pp. 454-457. Qushayrî, Al-Risâla al-qushayriyya, Cairo 1940, p. 31.

[6] See about him Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 123-129. The author states that "From him the school of the Malâmatî spread (wa minhu intashara madhhab almalâma)" (ibidem p. 123; Abû Nu'aym, Hilyat al-awliyâ', X, 231; Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 19).

[7] Hujwîrî, Kashf, p.183.

[8] Ibid.

[9] On samâ' see infra note 36 on p. 99.

[10] On the dhikr see infra note 16 on p. 116.

[11] The term 'ayyâr often also negatively designates young vagabonds, scoundrels often in the service of local powerful people, figures wholly similar to the "bravo" of Manzoni's memory; in this case, however, the term is synonymous with fatâ, or the young man belonging to the Futuwwa. See EI^2 under the entry 'Ayyâr (Fr. Taeschner), in which this very passage from the Kashf al-mahjûb is quoted.

[12] Hujwîrî, Kashf, pp. 183-184.

[13] Cf. A. Schimmel, Sufism or the mystical dimensions of Islam. Paris 1996, p. 150.

[14] Sulamî, Risâla al-malâmatiyya, trans. it.: I custodi del segreto, edited by G. Sassi, Milano 1997, pp. 31-32.

[15] Sulamî, 'Uyûb al-nafs wa mudâwâtuhâ, trans. fr., Diseases of the soul and their remedies, edited by AK Zein, Milano 1990, pp. 57-58.

[16] Ibidem p. 65.

[17] On him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 115-122.

[18] Ibid p. 118.

[19] Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 124.

[20] Abû-l-Qâsim al-Junayd al-Baghdâdî was born in Nehâvand in Persia, but lived mainly in Baghdâd where he died in 297 h. (910 AD). He was one of the most important teachers of the Baghdâd school who played an important role in the doctrinal development of Sufism. On him see: AH Abdel-Kader, The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd, London 1976. Sulamî devotes a long chapter to Junayd in his Tabaqât, pp. 155-163; see also 'Attâr, Tadhkirat al-awliyâ'. Words of Sûfî, Milan 1994, pp. 307-311; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat, X, 255; Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 20; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 128-30.

[21] Sulamî, Tabaqât pp. 117-118. The same anecdote appears in Hujwîrî: Kashf, pp. 123-124.

[22] See infra note 7 on p. 112.

[23] Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 193. The author refers here to a precise historical fact, when Abû al-Hasan Nûrî (d. 907 AD), Raqqâm and Abû Hamza, three Sufis of the Baghdâd group, were accused of heresy and sentenced to death by order of the Caliph. When the executioner approached Raqqâm, Nûrî rose and offered himself in his place. He was asked the reason for such generous behavior and Nûrî replied: «My doctrine is based on altruistic sacrifice (îthâr). Life is the most precious commodity in the world, and I want to sacrifice

the last few moments I have left for the sake of my brothers. In my judgment, one instant in this world is better than a thousand years in the world to come, as this is the place of devoted service (khidma) and that is the place of proximity (qurba), and proximity is earned by devoted service ». These words reached the ears of the Caliph who saved the lives of Nûrî and his other companions. Ibid p. 191.

[24] On him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 170-175.

[25] Sulamî, Tabaqât, p. 170.

[26] Ibid. pp. 302-306.

[27] R. Deladrière, “Les Premiers Malâmatiyya”, p. 5.

[28] Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 67.

[29] Regarding the initiatory hierarchy and its degrees, see, in this same series, Ibn 'Arabî, The mystery of the guardians of the world (Kitâb manzil al-qutb wa maqâmu-hu wa hâlu-hu) edited by C. Casseler, Turin 2001.

30 Ibn 'Arabî, Al-Futûhât al-makkiyya, II, 16. See also M. Chodkiewicz, “The Malâmiyya in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabî” in Melamis-Bayramis. Studies, p. 17.

31 Ibn 'Arabi, Futuhât, II,

32 Ibidem, p. 20.

[33] According to Ibn 'Arabî this verse, which at the same time designates them, without a shadow of a doubt, as Allâh's "Men of Trust", to whom the "Pledge" has in fact been assigned, bears a clear sign of the blame addressed to the Malamati. Resorting to a very particular hermeneutic, Ibn 'Arabî sees in the two negative attributes "an oppressor and an ignoramus" (zalûm-an jahûl-an) of the verse, nothing other than the hidden designation of this particular category of saints. The meaning of this becomes clearer if we examine another example of this particular hermeneutical method, and more precisely the interpretation of the expression, recurring in the Sûra al-Baqara, with which the impious and the unbelievers are defined (kuffâr, sing kâfir): «Deaf, dumb and blind, they understand nothing!» (Cor. 2:18, 171). Shaykh al-Akbar distinguishes in this case the various meanings acquired by the Arabic root KFR, which means both "to be ungrateful" and "to be unbeliever", but which also means "to hide, to conceal": «The unbeliever (kâfir) is the one to whom God has sealed the heart, the hearing and has spread a veil over his gaze; as for the hidden (kafir) among the saints, he is the one to whom the True has sealed his heart, for He has made it His home and has said: "My earth and My heaven do not contain me, but my heart contains me." of My devoted servant" (hadîth qudsî). ... Because He has sealed the heart of that servant, none enters it but his Lord. ... Deaf, dumb and blind, they understand nothing: deaf to hearing what is not allowed to be heard, or any speech (kalâm) that is not the speech addressed to them by their Sovereign; dumb, because they utter no other discourse that is not pleasing to their Sovereign... blind, because their gaze rests only on God Most High... who "understand nothing", except

God» (Futûhât, II, 136). See Ibn 'Arabî, Al-Tajalliyât al-ilâhiyya, ed. O. Yahyâ, Tehran 1988, p. 475; M. Chodkiewicz, “Les Malâmiyya dans la doctrine d'Ibn 'Arabî”, p. 18.

[34] Ibn 'Arabî, Futûhât, II, 261. Vedere anche Jâmî, Nafhât al-uns min hadarât al-quds, a cura di M. Tawhîdîpûr, Teheran 1358 H..sh., pp. 311-312.

[35] H. Algar, “Elements of Malâmâtî provenance in the primitive Naqshbandî tradition”, in Melamis-Bayramis. Studies, p. 27.

[36] M. Molé, “Around Daré Mansour: the mystical apprenticeship of Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband” in Revue des Etudes Islamiques, 1959, p. 52.

[37] Sulami, I custodi del segreto, p. 39.

38 'Ali al-Safi, Rashahât 'ayn al-hayât. Beads of Dew from the Source of Life, curated by M. Holland, Lauderdale 2001, p. 73.

39 Sulamî, I Custodi del Segreto, pp. 107-1 38-3

40 H. Algar, “Elements of Malâmâtî Provenance in the Primitive Naqshbandî Tradition ”, p. 34-3

41 Th. Zarcone, “Muhammad Nur al-'Arabî and the Malâmiyya Brotherhood (19th-20th Centuries)”, in A. Popovic and G. Veinstein, The Ways of Allâh, Parigi 1996, pp. 100-100. 479-4 See also A. Popovic, “The Third Phase of the Melamis in the Balkans”, in Melamis-Bayramis. Studies, pp. 179-2

[42] M. Gaborieau, “Le concept de malâmat en Inde: hétéropraxie et hiérarchie”, in Melamis-Bayramis. Études, pp. 37-51.

[43] Abû-l-Hasan Z. Fârûqî, Maqâmât-i Khayr, Delhi 1989, pp. 518-520 (thanks to F. Speziale for the report). See also N. Bahrâychî, Ma'mûlât-i Mazhariyya, Kânpûr 1275 H., pp. 25-26.

[44] On this rank and on the respective claims of Ibn 'Arabî and of the Shaykh al-Tijânî see P. Urizzi, “The secret of the Seal of the saints” in Perennia Verba 8-9, 2004-2005, pp. 3-60.

[45] M. al-'Arabî al-Sâ'ih, Bughyat al-mustafîd, Cairo 1959, pp. 71-72 (thanks to P. Urizzi for the report).

[46] G. Böwering, “The Qur'ân Commentary of al-Sulamî” in Islamic Studies presented to Charles J. Adams, Leiden 1991, pp. 43-45. For the list of Sulamî's works, and the location of the manuscripts of the three works translated into this book, see Brockelmann, GAL I, 218-219, GAS I, 361; Sezgin, GAS I, 671-674; Ziriqlî, Al-A'lâm VI, 99; Kahhâla, Mu'jam IX, 258-259.

[47] Sulamî, Haqâ'iq al-Tafsîr, 2 vols., edited by S. 'Umrân, Dâr al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, Beirut 2001.

[48] For a complete list of manuscripts and the libraries where they are found, see G. Böwering, "The Qur'ân Commentary of al-Sulamî", pp. 41-56.

[49] Ziyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr. The Minor Qur'ân Commentary of Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulamî (d. 412/1021), edited by G. Böwering, Beirut 1995. The Arabic edition was taken from the single manuscript known, preserved in the Gazi Husrev Beg Biblioteka in Sarajevo. See also G. Böwering, "The Major Sources of Sulamî's minor Qur'ân commentary", in Oriens, 1996, n. 35.

[50] G. Böwering, The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam, Berlin 1980, p. 111.

[51] Rûzbehân Baqlî, Arâ'is al-bayân fî haqâ'iq al-Qur'ân, 2 vols., Kawnpore 1884. Qushayrî, Latâ'if al-ishârât, 3 vols., Cairo 1981.

[52] See G. Böwering, The Mystical Vision, pp. 52-53. The relationship between Ibn 'Atâ' and Sulamî was examined by P. Nwyia in Trois Oeuvres inédites de Mystiques musulmans, Beirut 1973, pp. 23-182; that between Sulamî and Tustarî by G. Böwering in The Mystical Vision, pp. 110-128.

[53] G. Böwering expresses serious doubts on the attribution of the Koranic commentary to the Imâm Ja'far al-Sâdiq. This attribution, explains Böwering, would be due to the extreme popularity of the latter in Sufistic circles and to the tendency on the part of Sunni authors, including Sulamî, Hujwîrî and others, to "appropriate" the figure and spiritual personality of Ja' far al-Sâdiq, regardless of any belonging to Shiism. The name of the sixth Imâm, according to Böwering, would have been misused to highlight an apocryphal commentary. See “The Qur'ân Commentary of al-Sulamî”, pp. 53-54. The same doubt is shared by Massignon who, however, examining the sources in his Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane, Paris 1999, pp. 201-213, refuses to reject a priori the attribution of the sentences in the tafsîr of Sulamî to Ja'far al-Sâdiq, trusting the authority of Ibn 'Atâ' and Dhû-l-Nûn Misrî, who were the first to testify . Then there is the conflicting opinion of P. Nwyia who points out strong similarities between the exegetical text attributed to Ja'far Sâdiq with a commentary on the Koran that bears his name, collected by Muhammad b. Ibrahîm al-Nu'mânî, disciple of Kulaynî (d. 940) the author of Usûl al-kâfî one of the most important collections of Hadîth compiled in the Shiite sphere. See Exégèse coranique et langage mystique, Beirut 1991, p. 159. Fr. Nwyia also collected in a single file all the sentences of the sixth Imâm contained in the Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr of Sulamî entitled: “Le Tafsîr mystique attribué à Ja'far Sâdiq” in Mélanges de l'Université Saint- Joseph, volume XLIII/4, Beirut 1968.

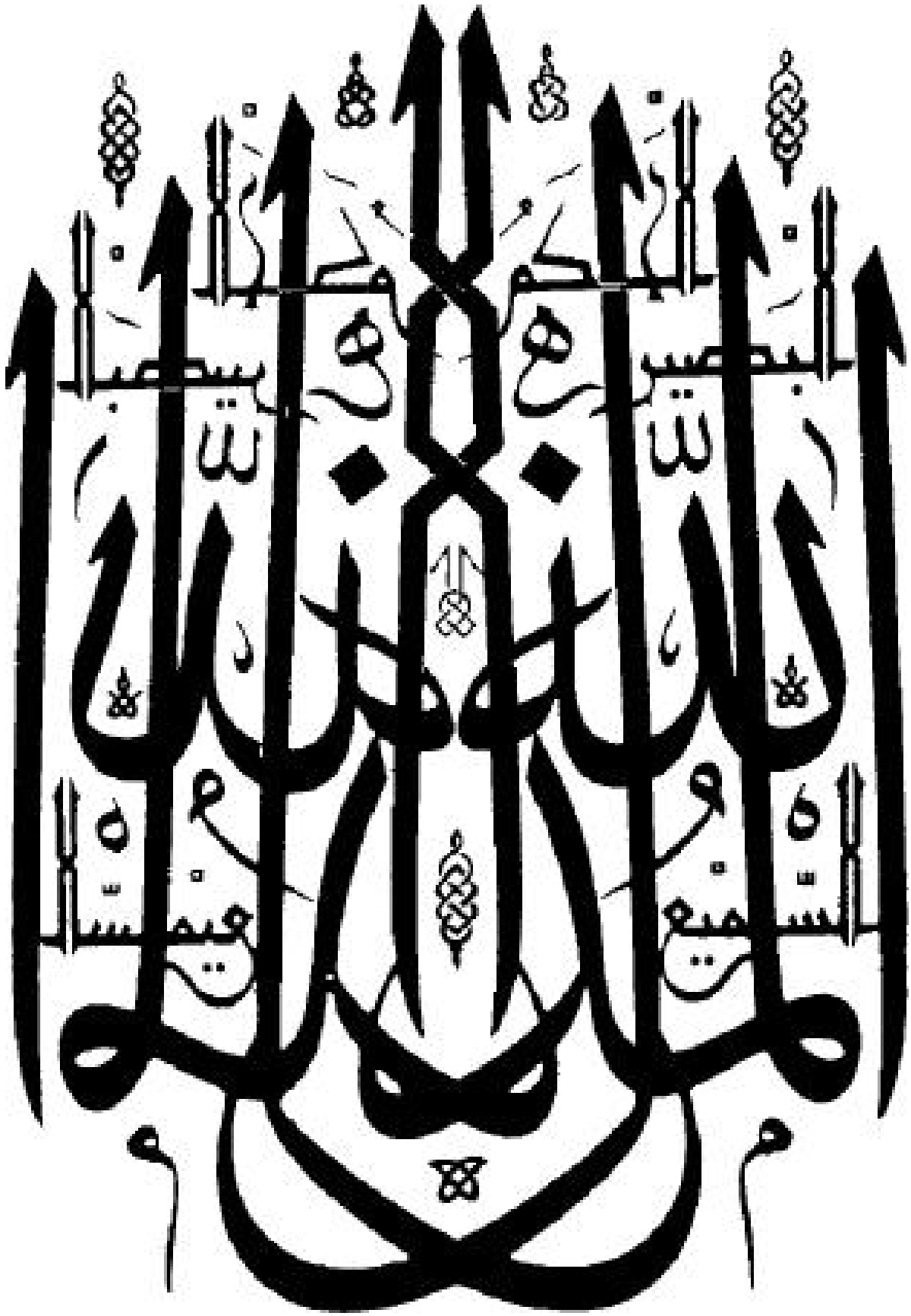
[54] Sulamî, Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 436. P. Nwyia, The mystical Tafsîr attributed to Ja'far Sâdiq, p. 209; Qur'anic exegesis and mystical language, pp. 179-180.

[55] Sulamî, Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 284-285; P. Nwyia, The mystical Tafsîr attributed to Ja'far Sâdiq, p. 223; Qur'anic exegesis and mystical language, p. 186.

[56] See in this same series, Sulamî, Introduction to Sufism (Al-Muqaddima fi-l-tasawwuf), edited by D. Giordani, Turin 2002.

[57] See, Sulamî, Futuwwa, tracté de chevalerie spirituelle, edited by F. Skalî, Paris 1989.

[58] Edited by N. Pûrjavâdî, Tehran 1372 H.sh.



Inscription in which stands out: Allâh al-Mudhill, "God, He who lowers and humiliates".

Mirror calligraphy – Ulu Cami mosque, Bursa (1399)

THE WAYS OF THE GNOSTIC

Manâhij al-'ârifin

In the Name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

Sufism has a beginning and an end and includes stations.

Its beginning is divine favor (tawfîq),[1] guarding against the torpor of negligence (ghafla)[2], putting an end to the soul's habits and instinctive tendencies (tab'), then turning away (hijrân) from bad company, from places where the orders of God Most High are disobeyed, and finally from forcing the soul (nafs) to return to the Paths of the People of Integrity (turuq ahl al-salâh).

As soon as the soul has subjected itself to this and thus has succeeded in freeing itself from wickedness, action will be taken to correct the heart, so that it consents to what the soul has consented to. As soon as the heart and soul have responded and have let themselves be led, condescending and submissive, they will be handed over to the Most High God, so that it may be He who guards, on our behalf, what returns to Him. God Most High says: «And turn to your Lord repent and give yourselves to Him» (Cor. 39: 54)[3].

Later it will be necessary to look for one of the guides (imâm) of the group of initiates (qawm), one of those whose correct advice is clearly manifested only to those who know how to honor their company (suhba)[4] and know how to behave with perfect spiritual

education. In turning to him, the seeker must be free from any judgment (ahkâm) in mind and character, (there must be in him only the predisposition to accept) the authority of the one to whom he turns, emptied of all peculiarity. So that, when that sage will turn his gaze towards him, he will understand by virtue of that gaze the reason for his illness; so he will have indicated the cure, this will intervene on the disease and he will recover, with the permission of the Most High God.

If you turn to him in reality returning to your material problems (asbâb), or to your peculiarities, let him know that he is only wasting his time, and that the words of that sage will have no effect on him. Abû Yazîd[5] – may God have mercy on him – said: «Do not appropriate anything, and everything will belong to you!».

It is therefore the task of whoever is the point of reference (maqsûd) for the orientation of the aspirant (qâsid) to show what he/she needs to know about the provisions of the sacred law (sharî'a) in terms of ritual purity, canonical prayer, fasting, tithing and pilgrimage to Mecca. He will have to guide him in learning and study the Book of God, then he will have to instruct him in the search for lawful nourishment and in making the maximum effort (juhd) in this practice. So he will have to show him the detachment from this low world, instructing him on how to get away from it in order to deal with the Other at all times, and with what escapes him from it. He will teach them to eat little, sleep little and speak little[6]; he will instruct him in spiritual retreat (khalwa) and in isolation ('uzla)[7], to contain his happiness, to stay awake at night, to cry a lot about the days that have passed, for having wasted time and for ruining his existence, since the Prophet - upon him the prayer and greeting of God - said:

«The servant's feet will not move on the Day of Judgment until he is questioned about four things: about his life and how he spent it, about his youth and what he did with it, about his possessions, how he acquired them and how he spent it, how he acted when he obtained science»[8].

If (the aspirant) will persevere in these states, God Most High will grant him His favor, making his repentance sincere. If the Station of Repentance (maqâm al-tawba)[9] has actually been accomplished, a flash of the Lights of Divine Love (lâ'ih min anwâri al-mahabba) will appear (to the aspiring one), for God the Most High has said: «God loves those who repent, those who purify themselves» (Cor. 2: 222) [10].

If the repentance and purification are true there will be that glow, and He will lead them into spiritual strife and warfare, strengthening the acts of obedience and easing the strife and discordant natural tendencies in the soul. The heart will lead the soul to abandon its enjoyments and ignoble natural tendencies: greed, avarice, vulgarity and the rest of the unworthy qualities, (replacing them with) praiseworthy qualities.

It is handed down from the Prophet - upon him the prayer and God's greeting - who said: «God does not form His close friend (walî) except in generosity»[11].

Instead of slander and gossip, sincerity and honesty. The Prophet said in the hadîth – May God pray for him and greet him: «Let man seek sincerity until it is written with God that he is a truthful»[12].

Instead of hatred and rancor, there will be perfection of heart (sadr) and good will.

God Most High says (reporting Abraham's words): «["Do not make me fall into disgrace on the Day in which men are resurrected: it will be a Day in which neither riches nor children will be of any help,] but only [will have help] who he will have brought to God an uncontaminated heart» (Cor. 26: 87-89)[13].

In place of greed, contentment, and so on.

If the soul is clarified, if it perseveres in the path of righteousness, and if it puts on the qualities we have spoken of, then (the aspirant) will cross the boundaries (of the Station) of the will (irāda).

Among the Stations of the will, (there is the degree to which the wayfarer) entirely abandons his own will, which the soul has enveloped with the demands of this lower world[14]. Hence (the degree) of total renunciation of the world, so that one does not then return (from this station) to what was a known custom (ma'lûm); finally that of rejoicing over what has been obtained (mawjûd) and saddening over what has been lost (mafqûd). This low world must be (for those who aspire to God) as if it never existed, since it never was, and it too will shortly be no more.

The degrees of "those who want" (God, murîdîn) are three: first comes the one who wants God Most High for himself, and his

distinctive sign is the devout practice carried out out of desire and fear.

Then there is the degree of who wants only God Most High; he is distinguished by devout practice, which he does not do in exchange for something, but which is rather happy for the very fact of doing it.

Finally comes the one who entrusts himself entirely (to God) (mufawwid), who wants only what is wanted for him, and who neither attributes nor desires for himself (the realization) of particular stations, states or spiritual abodes: this is the noblest of them all. Such is the Will of the Prophets - upon them all the prayers of God - and of the noblest of saints. Can't you see that the Prophet - upon him the prayer and God's greeting - said in the same way: "I have entrusted myself to You and have entrusted all my things to You?"[15]. He left all that he possessed and entrusted himself to the One who is the true owner of everything, since He is the One who takes charge of governing men (al-mutawallî la-hum) at all times.

Now, if (the heart of) "the one who wants" (murîd) is in a certain station, the soul is present to it in what is similar to it. If the heart is with God Most High, the soul will experience spiritual states (ahwâl). If the heart experiences spiritual states, the soul will be in the Hereafter. If the heart is engaged in trusting entrustment (tawakkul)[16], the soul will be anxious in the search for what is lawful and for the permitted gain. If the heart is in the place of miraculous graces (karâmât)[17] and closeness (zulf), the soul will be engaged in its own search for the saints and the best among men. If the heart is busy with idle matters, the soul will be busy with what is forbidden.

The Prophet said – pray to God on him and greet him: «In a man's body there is a piece of meat, if it is healthy, the rest of the body is healthy [and if it becomes corrupted, the whole body corrupts. And isn't it the heart?]»[18].

The goal that the aspirants (murîdîn) set for themselves in turning to the wise teachers is of various kinds: there is the murîd who is oriented towards them trying to repent through the establishment of relationships of familiarity, who does not set Inner and metaphysical realities (haqâ'iq). The advantage that such a murîd will derive from the one towards whom he has oriented himself will be in accordance with his aspiration, nevertheless, it may be that the blessings implicit in his own orientation will return to him, and that this in turn will confirm him in such influences beneficial. It is in fact handed down that when he was told of a guy who participated in the prayer and stole, the Prophet - pray to God over him and give him your greetings - said: «It will be his prayer that prevents him»[19]. Or, as he said again - pray to God over him and give him greetings - speaking on behalf of his Lord: "They are such a kind that whoever sits with them does not fall into disgrace"[20].

There is the murîd who addresses the wise desirous of spiritual conversion; he will then guide him to the completeness of his repentance, on the path of ritual action (mu'âmala).

There is the murîd who turns to the wise for the renunciation of worldly things (zuhd); he will show him detachment from the world, even indifference and opposition to it, and the need to face difficulties.

There is the murîd who turns to the sage to await his wisdom, who holds no spiritual status nor desires any station. These are the men most worthy of being rescued by God Most High through the possibility of seeing the wise. When the sage turns his gaze upon him and sees that he is free from both vulgar motives and spiritual states, then his will be the gaze (nazar)[21] of compassion, mercy, loving concern, regard for his spiritual states, so as to guide him in every moment towards what is more suitable for him and is more appropriate to his condition. He will then begin to behave according to the teaching given to him by the wise man and will carry out his orders. Due to the excellence of the guidance of this master (imâm) it will be easy for him to control the sudden occurrence (hujûm)[22] of spiritual states, and he will be able to follow all the rules of good spiritual behavior (adab).

All this by virtue of the ability of the guide (dalîl), not for his own ability, since the guide, for the blessing (baraka) inherent in the gaze turned to the aspirant and for the pity he feels towards him, takes upon himself the weight of the aspirant's annoyances and worries. In other words, according to the look he directs at the aspirant and the pity he feels for him, they are granted the superabundances of divine favor at all times.

Don't you see how perfect was the concentration of the Prophet's gaze - pray to God on him and give him greetings - on Abû Bakr al-Siddîq[23], how complete his piety towards him was, how greatly his heart was inclined, and how much Was her spiritual state closer to yours? Can't you see how much these blessings affected him? And don't you see how Abû Bakr was right, when the Prophet asked him to make a voluntary donation (sadaqa), so as to obtain detachment from all wealth? And this to the point that when the Prophet - pray to God for him and greet him - said to him: "What have you kept of what belonged to you?" He replied: "God Most High and His Messenger!"[24]

He meant that what was left to him was that which never perishes and always endures, since God is the One who endures (al-Bâqî), and the One who never ceased and will never cease to be (lam yazal wa lâ yazâlu).

It is handed down from Abû Bakr al-Wâsitî[25] - may God have mercy on him - who said: «If it hadn't been for the shyness that the sight (of the Prophet) instilled in him - pray to God over him and give him greetings - Abû Bakr he would not have said «and His Envoy», and he would have spoken only of God (yufarridu). Is it not true that when the shyness that his sight inspired in him lost, he returned to the mention of God alone (tafrid) and said:

“Whoever worshiped Muhammad – pray to God over him and salute him – well (know that) now Muhammad is dead. Whoever wanted to adore the Lord of Muhammad well (know that) He is the Living One who does not die»[26] and recited:

“Muhammad is but an Envoy, and other Envoys came before him. And if he died or was killed, would you retrace your steps? But whoever retraces his steps does not harm God» (Cor.3: 144)[27].

On the contrary, the look that the Prophet - pray to God upon him and greet him - directed towards 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb[28] was different from the one he addressed to Abû Bakr, and consequently this had another effect on him. Thus, (when the Prophet asked for a voluntary bestowal) he came with half of his wealth. (Asked) "What did you keep of what belonged to you?" ('Umar) replied, "Half of my wealth." It is reported that the Prophet - pray to God over him and greet him - said (to 'Umar and Abû Bakr): "There is the same

difference between your offerings as there is between your two affirmations".

The look that the Prophet addressed to Sa'd[29] – God be pleased with him – was still different. [Thus, although Sa'd had said he wanted to donate two thirds of what he had, the Prophet] brought him back to one third and said to him: «A third is a lot!»[30] This is because he watched over their spiritual states, and knew the influence of his gaze on each of them.

Similarly wise teachers when they direct their gaze upon aspirants: according to the gaze which is directed at the aspirant, blessings are manifested in them. The Prophet – pray to God over him and greet him – said: «Blessed is he who sees me and he who sees him who has seen me!»[31] That is, blessed is he on whom my gaze and the fact of having me had an effect seen, and blessed is he on whom the fact of having seen my Companions has an effect. Thus the thing was handed down, from spiritual state to spiritual state, until it reached the sages of the (Islamic) community, and the saints of God who are on His earth. And therefore, whoever has received the influence deriving from the gaze of a wise man, or from having seen a saint, (know that) the spiritual blessing of that influence derives from the gaze that the Prophet - pray God upon him and give him the greeting - addressed to his Companions according to their different spiritual states, since this influence was exercised on each of them according to his state.

Thus this spiritual influence proceeds and is transmitted from the masters to the aspirants, and this until the end of time, since the chain of transmission of spiritual states (ahwâl) is like the chain of

transmission of legal statutes (ahkâm), although it is more delicate and thinner.

Sufism (tasawwuf), being a purely spiritual reality (haqîqa), already existed where there was neither a language (lisân) (that would define it) nor a rational discourse (kalâm) (that would describe it). It is made up of divine blessings that come from God's friends (awliyâ') and spiritual masters (mashâ'ikh), the influence of correct rules of spiritual behavior and good qualities of character. If, therefore, the sage's gaze acts on the aspirant and his blessing reaches him, this will dilate his chest and illuminate his heart. God Most High says «He whose breast God has opened to submission to Him (islâm), follows a light that comes from his Lord» (Cor. 39: 22)[32].

The Prophet was asked – pray to God for him and greet him – about these words and he replied: «It is a light thrown into the heart and which dilates the breast», «and what is the sign of it?» he was asked, he replied: "Departing from the abode of deception and returning to the abode of Eternity"[33].

Sufism is to despise this low world and detest it, moving away from it and from those who turn to it, and to be aware that looking at the world is something permitted to the common people, deplorable for the elect, and forbidden for the Envoys of God (rusul) – God's prayers be upon them all.

God Most High said: «And do not cast your eyes towards that of which We have given temporary enjoyment to some as a decoration of the present life» (Cor. 20: 131).

It is the duty of the aspirant to educate his soul at all times through the exercises of inner discipline and the trials of spiritual struggle, by engaging the tongue in remembrance of the Name of God (dhikr), the heart (qalb) in meditation, the inner secret (sirr) in observance (of one's duties) and vigilance, the spirit (rûh) in pure knowledge and contemplation[34].

Also know that he who is most rigorous in the beginning is most perfect in the end. Indeed the final outcomes depend on the initial states, if the one who has passed through them has been corrected: the more he has been sincere in his devoted service (khidma), the clearer the contemplation will be for him; the more truthful his spiritual state has been, the more perfect his holiness will be; the more he has perfected his science, the more complete will be his surrender to God; the more his wisdom is integral, the more total will be his submission.

The perfect surrender (to God, al-tafwîd) is that of the Beloved of God (al-habîb)[35] who said – pray to God over him and greet him – «I have entrusted everything to You»[36]. Conversely, perfect submission (taslîm) is that of God's intimate Friend (al-khalîl)[37] – Peace be upon him – who said: «I submitted to the Lord of the worlds» (Cor. 2:131).

God Most High established that the ways to reach the divine Realities were arranged, through the way of spiritual stations, according to progressive stages, and He said, the Mighty and Exalted (implicitly indicating a hierarchy of spiritual conditions): «[Those who obey God and His Messenger] will be together with those to whom God bestowed His favours: Prophets, Truth-seekers, Martyrs (shuhadâ'), Righteous (sâlihîn), truly sublime companions!» (Cor. 4:69).

(Therefore, according to what is said in the verse) the beginning of the stations and spiritual degrees is constituted by righteousness (maqâm al-salâh), their term is represented by truthfulness (siddîqiyya). Prophecy (nubuwwa) and the law-making mission (risâla) are separated and distinct from the spiritual conditions of creatures, because (the Prophets) possess the perfection of spiritual conditions, while (normal) men pass by the margins of them.

After righteousness comes the Martyrs' Station (maqâm alshuhadâ'). In apparent reality (fî-l-zâhir), the martyr does not actually become such until after death on the battlefield, but in true reality (fî-l-haqîqa) it is the killing of the soul to lustful desires, despite the soul continues to have its emotions[38], but adhering to the rules of behavior and the moral virtues of the aspirants, of which I have just spoken.

After the station of the martyrs comes the station of the truthful (maqâm al-siddîqîn), which is one of the states of the Sufis. The highest degree of realization of truthfulness is being in agreement with the Envoy - pray to God upon him and give him greetings - in what he orders, in conformity with his acts and with the characteristics of his character, renouncing everything that differs from his conduct.[39]

As for the inner states (ahwâl) which manifest themselves at the beginning of this Station, if (the aspirant) is able to sustain them he will make them his own, otherwise he will limit himself to the good characteristics of character (akhlâq), and if he is not able to implement them, he will at least try to practice the modalities of an appropriate spiritual behavior (âdâb). Even if all these stations

escape him, the fact of following the sunna should not escape him, since one must in no case fall from the rank of compliance with the sunna.

(The aspirant must) know that the lowest degree of the abodes of Prophecy ends where the highest degree of Holiness and Sufism begins[40], for Messengers and Prophets – the prayers of God be upon them all – are established, lest there let there be the slightest space neither for deception nor for doubt in the Revelation (wahy), in the contemplation of the divine mystery (ghayb) and in the direct perception (ittilâ') of the norms of the sacred Law relating to men. The Envoys (rusul) are in charge of the Prophets – upon them peace – the Saints, the Truthful, the Martyrs and the Pure.

When some misfortune overtakes them, the profane find shelter in the people of Integrity (ahl al-salâh), (that is) in the aspirants (murîdîn), the aspirants find shelter in the connoisseurs (ârifîn), the connoisseurs find shelter in the Sufis, and the Sufis find shelter in their Lord. God Most High said: «[Those who obey God and His messenger], will be together with those to whom God bestowed His favours: Prophets, Truth-seekers, Martyrs, Saints, truly sublime companions!» (Cor. 4:69)[41]. (The gist is that) God 'gives' to each of these groups that surplus of His mercy and grace which He bestows on those who belong to it; none of them sees himself in his own state and in his own spiritual moments, but rather sees the action of the Most High God in him, and the favor that He grants him. And whoever still sees himself as a free and autonomous being then falls from the rank of those who know the Truth (muhaqqiqîn).

If the aspirant fully realizes his will it becomes essential for him to distinguish between the spiritual states. If a Station arrives for him in

which renunciation (zuhd) and showing renunciation (tazahhud), patience (sabr) and forcing oneself to be patient (tasabbur), certainty (yaqîn) and wanting to be certain (tayaqqun) coexist), scruple (wara') and the effort to be scrupulous (tawarru'), sadness (due to the distance from God) (huzn) and feigning sadness (tahazzun), crying (bakâ') and forcing oneself to cry (tabâkî), understanding (fahm) and pretending to understand (tafahhum), feeling awe (khawf) and striving to feel it (takhawwuf), perceiving by taste (dhawq) and wanting to savor (tadhawwuq), and so on, he will make a clear distinction, and he will have to move towards the most perfect condition, since the degree of the one who makes an effort, pretends, or appears to do something (mutafa''il) is more limited than the degree of the one who simply puts something into action (do the). The Station of the one who simply implements (these virtues) is more perfect and his blessing is total.

If these stations are done correctly, if both his inner and outer reality are free from illusory doubts and suspicions, and if divine help assists him, this is for him the beginning of Sufism.

Junayd[42] said – May God have mercy on him: «If God grants His help to the aspirant He leads him into the presence of the Sufis, and causes the end of the path of the Will to be the beginning of Sufism». At the end of the path of the Will there is in fact the clarification (safâ') of the external and internal reality from all impurities. If he has been clear in his will, he becomes clarified (sûfiya) in his purity, and is then called "Sufi".

Undertaking the initial grades of Sufism, he is more resolute in repeating the initiatory litanies (awrâd) than he was in the stage of Will, for in the stage of Will he was exhausted and engaged in effort,

while in the initial stage of Sufism he is calm and relaxed (mustarîh), since he becomes desired (murâd) after having desired (murîd), he is carried after he has been the bearer.[43]

You will see him continually engaged in spiritual effort (mujâhada), assiduous in devotional practices and in enlivening the ritual prescriptions dictated by the prophetic tradition (sunan), convinced advocate of the best doctrine, persevering in the way of his religious guides ('a'imma) and his spiritual masters (mashâykh), to the point of separating himself from those who are incompatible with him and with his guides. The Sufi is then the one who by his deeds is a model for the aspirants (murîdîn).[44]

In the initial stages of Sufism one will see (the aspirant) rejoicing after being gloomy, laughing after weeping, relaxing after being contracted, being humble after being arrogant. He will enable men to get in touch with his outer reality by eating and drinking, by sitting in familiar company, by listening attentively, and so on; however, in the same way that the virtues of the aspirants, their compliance with the rules of good spiritual conduct, and their spiritual exercises appear in him externally, he will inwardly ensure that no one abuses him.

It is first of all necessary that the Sufi impose on himself rules of good education and the observance of virtuous customs; only then will God Most High grant him high spiritual states. The sign that will distinguish him among people will be good humour, serenity, naturalness; in fact, it is handed down that the Prophet – may God pray over him and greet him – always smiled, though without laughing openly, and said: «In truth, I am joking, but I am saying nothing but the truth»[45].

His companions recalled before him the stories and poems of the Age of Ignorance (Jâhiliyya)[46], and while they laughed, he smiled – God pray upon him and give him greetings. Their external reality did its utmost for the creatures while their internal secret (remained) preserved for the True. There was for them no noble quality they did not aim for, nor virtuous action among the religious practices they did not aspire to. They destined their time to constantly carry out acts of obedience and compliance, to read the Koran and to teach what needed to be taught of the science of religious law.

He is not part of the Sufi who ignores the decrees of God Most High and the decrees of the Messenger of God - may God pray upon him and give him greetings - and whoever has not learned the external norms well will not be assisted in improving the internal realities . Indeed, God the Most High says: «But those who fight for Us, We will guide them in Our ways» (Cor. 29: 69)[47].

But how can someone who neglects the external norms of Tradition be faithful to the essential Realities and Secrets (alhaqâ'iq wa-l-asrâr)? Since whoever realizes certainty (of Realities and Secrets) is only the traveler of the Sufi way, how will he be able to realize certainty if, along the Way, he does not devote himself assiduously to effort and learning? And above all, of what can he ever be certain? He who ignores the decrees that God Most High imposes on his external reality is not a Sufi.

Likewise, he who possesses spiritual states which are contrary to religious science is not a Sufi. Said Junayd - may God have mercy on him - to Ibn 'Alwân[48]: «Accompanied to sacred science, and spiritual states will penetrate you, for God Most High says: "Instead men of

sound science will say: 'We have faith in it (the Book divine)'"» (Cor. 3: 7).

He whose inner states do not conform to the sunna, he is not a Sufi. It is handed down by the Prophet – may God pray for him and give him greetings -: «Whoever holds firmly to my sunna when my community becomes corrupted, is like one who holds a burning brand in his hand»[49]. Whoever does not model the virtues of his character and the rules of his conduct on the Koran and the sunna, he does not belong to the Sufis.

It is with reference to them that God Most High warned His Prophet - may God pray upon him and greet him - when he said: "Do not turn away those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, for the desire of His countenance" (Cor. 6: 52)[50].

And he further said: «[Be patient with those who call on their Lord in the morning and in the evening for the desire of His face] and do not turn away your eyes from them for the desire of worldly beauties» (Cor. 18: 28); they do not contradict Our wish, nor transgress Our dispositions[51].

They are the ones who turn away completely from this lower world; that they turn to it only for that little that the sacred law has not allowed them to neglect, such as covering their nudity, or taking enough food to support themselves in the execution of ritual obligations. They have made abstention from this low world, removal and total detachment from it, their hallmark; for this they are called "poor" (fuqarâ'). God Most High said: «[And you will give] to those poor people who are totally committed to the way of God [so much

so that they cannot travel the earth to trade. The ignorant consider them rich, for their dignified modesty, while you will recognize them by the sign that distinguishes them: they do not ask people insistently]» (Cor. 2: 273)[52].

The poverty (faqr)[53] that they have chosen, and from which they take their name, will have to be (for the one who aspires to God) the total lack of need for created beings (akwân) and that they be totally renounced, so that no need remains except for the One who is the cause of the existence of created beings (mukawwinu-lakwân). Whoever is poor and in need of something will be satisfied by finding (wujûd) that thing again; thus, whoever is satisfied with anything other than God Most High, his satisfaction is deplorable.

They (the Sufis) are not satisfied except by the Truth, since they have no need of anyone but Him, and therefore they are satisfied only with Him. This is why the Prophet said - May God pray over him and give him greetings –: «Poverty (faqr) nearly becomes unbelief (kufr)»[54]. In other words, the need for something other than God Most High almost turns into disbelief, since the truly poor person is in reality the one who needs Him, nothing but Him.

Poverty is the opposite of wealth; God Most High attributed wealth to Himself, and described His servants as poor, and said: “O men! You are in need of God, and God is Rich, always Worthy of Praise” (Cor. 35:15)[55].

Just as it is impossible for the wealth of the True to change into poverty, being one of the Qualities of Its Essence[56], so it is impossible for the poverty of servants to transform into wealth; rather, their

poverty can only turn into contentment (istighnâ'); in such a condition there is a much greater need for the One with whom one is satisfied, more than in the condition of poverty. This is one aspect of the essential reality of poverty, wealth and contentment; this is the poverty of the elect (al-khusûs).

The poverty of the profane, on the other hand, is the need to seek and find (wujûd) what makes one materially rich; whoever is in search of this low world will get rich by finding it; those who need prestige will become rich by obtaining it; whoever needs a certain friendship (walâya)[57] will be enriched by his presence. All this constitutes that deplorable poverty from which the Prophet - pray to God about him and greet him - sought protection, since it is handed down that in his invocations he asked (to God): "I seek refuge in You from poverty (faqr)!" [58]. He also said – peace be upon him: «Poverty almost becomes unbelief»[59]. And again: «One is not rich in the quantity of goods, true wealth is the wealth of soul»[60] and that is, being free from needing these wastes.

There may be a faqîr who does not possess worldly goods and thinks for this reason that he has a merit over those who do possess them, and that this merit resides in the fact that he got rid of (these worldly goods), unlike the rich who do not have it. still done. He praises himself for his poverty, while in such poverty there is no merit, nor does it constitute a particular spiritual grade, except (for having had) patience (sabr) or for being satisfied (ridâ') with such a condition. So in such a case, the merit one has obtained depends on the spiritual degree of patience and contentment; in reality this is not true poverty, but only lack (of worldly goods) and need.

The poor man who becomes insolent with a rich man because of his poverty shows his baseness and reveals the rank he attaches in his heart to what the rich man possesses. If only he had really built the Poverty Station, he would have compassion for his condition, and would thank God Most High for the situation in which he is. It is handed down from Râbi'a[61] – may God have mercy on her – that a group of people were intent on denigrating the world in her presence; she interjected, saying, "Whoever loves a thing mentions it frequently."

The rich man who does not pay due respect to the fuqarâ' and who has not seen their merit lays bare his own abjection, since he thinks that (his) "loans" ('awârî) (obtained from God) are grounds for merit .

It may be that one who has wealth is poor (spiritually), seeing that everything possessed belongs to the one who is the True Owner, and is absolutely in need of the One who is the Owner of all property. Similarly it can happen, for those who are needy, miserable and deprived of goods, that their condition cannot be called (spiritual) poverty, if anything, lack or need (of material goods). On the other hand, the one to whom the Station of poverty in God Most High belongs, and of being satisfied in Him, does not harm the abundance of goods nor their scarcity[62], nor the alternation of situations in which one is in company (arfâq) nor the interruption of these, since he has reached the spiritual Station in which the absence or presence of a thing are equivalent.

It is only for their benefit (of the aspirants) that such situations of conviviality and friendship (arfâq) take place in the spiritual Station we are speaking of; such situations are manifested only for those

aspirants who love (the fuqarâ'), so that they are like the cause (of the coming into being of these situations), while (the fuqarâ') they become like the intermediaries for obtaining from part of the aspirants of (spiritual) poverty. (For their part, those who have already realized such poverty) possess a spiritual determination (himma) far superior to relying on, or even turning to, anything other than the One whom they need, and Whom they are. satisfied.

Later, when the condition of Poverty has become clear in them, they enter the Station of compassion towards creatures (al-shafaqa 'alâ-l-khalq), and the idea of disapproving of them ceases. For example, I have heard Shaykh Abû Sahl say,[63] – God have mercy on him – when asked about Sufism, he replied: 'Disapprove of disapproval (al-'i'râd 'ani-l-'i'tirâd)'.

In that spiritual condition one does not look at those who disobey except to have mercy on them and to invoke God on their behalf; nor is he observed who obeys except to exalt his honour; nor finally do we consider those who are struck by adversity except to have compassion for them, as if they were struck by that same trial. (When the 'poor in God' comes to) have knowledge of this in all his conditions, having understood the foregoing, he becomes a refuge for creatures, a support for those who are troubled and a refuge for those who flee.

Whoever sees (one of them) becomes familiar with him because of his familiarity with his Lord (bi-rabbihi); whoever accompanies him trusts in him, because he has trusted in his Master (ilâ sayyidihi). He is not arrogant with anyone, he doesn't blame anyone, but rather he justifies everyone for what they are.

In this Station pity for the aspirants (murîdîn) and respect for the elderly masters (mashâykh) are multiplied. The Prophet said – may God pray for him and give him greetings – : «Whoever does not have mercy on our 'little ones' (saghîranâ) and does not venerate our 'big ones' (kabîranâ) is not one of us»[64]. (Note that the Prophet) has not only said that he has mercy on the "little ones" and veneration for the "big ones", he puts them in relation to himself (since he calls them "ours").

Then (who has reached the level of compassion) show pity for every "little one" who travels the path of the Will and show him the path that leads to the True and the way to reach Him. And venerate every "great one" who has reached the rank of spiritual guides (a'imma) following impeccably the example of the one who is to be modeled on, namely the Chosen One (mustafâ) - may God pray upon him and give him the greeting – without ever contradicting him in deeds and words. So if our "little ones" are those who have achieved the Will, our "great ones" are those who have achieved Knowledge with certainty.

Then let him then carefully receive those who wish to address him and those who visit him, then ask him about his spiritual state, and ask him by whom he has been instructed, for anyone who has not been instructed by a teacher (shaykh) is a futile man (battâl), and nothing good will ever be obtained from a person who has not been touched by the gaze of a master, nor has he been the object of his compassion.

After (the latter) has reminded him who he knows and has made his Way (tarîqa) known to him, and he will have understood the goodness of his intention and will have ascertained the integrity of

his initial state, he will have to guide him towards what he he thinks it is more suitable for him, and he will have to educate him so as to make him obtain the best result from his education.

He imparts education to those who turn to him in the kindest way and according to the noblest qualities of character, and inspires him to the simplest of behaviors and the most polite. In fact, the Prophet – may God pray over him and give him greetings – said: «Verily God the Most High is kind and loves kindness, and grants it what he does not grant to violence»[65].

Education and guidance are to be given as often as possible (by example) of acts, so that the especially perspicacious aspirant (kayyis) may learn from them. If, however, this has not had an effect on him then he will be instructed through words and recommendations. The Prophet - God pray over him and give him greetings - taught a nomadic Arab to pray when he saw that he was observing him during prayer, and he said to him: «When you rise to pray, do the prescribed ablution, just as God he orders you to do, then you do this and that»[66]. When he saw that his Companions regulated their conduct on the basis of his gestures, he said to them: «Pray as you have seen me pray»[67]. He did not say «…as I pray», because he knew their inability to reach his spiritual condition.

Therefore (in the imitation) of his deeds the inner realities become like figures of the inner reality (haqîqa) of the Prophet - God's prayers and Peace be upon him. He explains to them that they can attain perfection by imitating his deeds and the outward appearance of his directions: since they are in the abode of greed and dust (fî mahalli-sh-sharahi wa-l-ghubra), let them therefore be greedy for observance of the prescriptions and vigilant attention (towards one's

state, al-murâqaba)! He instructs them to have recourse to the norms of Tradition (sunan), to inner struggle, to noble virtues, and to good standards of education, and they do not lack time to do more, outwardly and inwardly.

This spiritual Station educates (the aspirant) to contemplate those 'overabundances' (zawâ'id) which reach the heart, the intimate secret or the spirit; thus he will traverse the planes of intimacy (with God) (uns), inwardly, and outwardly the planes of devoted servitude (khidma); in spiritual realities, he will seek inner states, just as he will seek outer engagement with sincerity and truthfulness.

Intimacy with his Lord and having found rest in His service will cause him to cease engaging in acquiring states, seeking spiritual moments and (in savoring) the sweetness of it all, to devote himself to creatures and what concerns them. Thus he will inspire awe in the profane and be authoritative in the eyes of his fellows; he will be close to them physically, but far from them in spiritual condition. All of this is part of the states of “contraction” (qabd) and “expansion” (bast) that many have alluded to[68].

The Sufis call this station the: "Station of freedom" (maqâm al-hurriyya)[69] which means to be free from everything in creation that enslaves creatures and from what is attractive in it, by means of sincere servitude to the Sovereign. Whoever reaches it enters the ranks of those who are called "the Keepers of the Secret" (al-umanâ')[70] and for this reason has the faculty of knowing in depth the hidden realities (al-asrâr). Become a participant in intimate conversations (mukallam), receptor of inspired speeches (muhaddath)[71] and holder of intuitive sagacity (sâhib firasa); thus he is made aware of the realities of the unmanifested world

(mughayyabât) by reason of his loyalty (amâna), and he dominates the Station of aspirants and the spiritual states of the Gnostics. This is the extreme limit of holiness.

Then comes the moment (for the one who has reached this Station) of the manifestation of the wonders (karâmât)[72] that God grants in response to the invocations and requests. He – be exalted! – does not exhort to invocation and prayer except to grant His creature, and does not extend His hand, at the moment in which beings are upset (inqilâb al-a'yân), except to reach whomever He desires (murâd).

Then enter the Oath Light Station (maqâm anwâr al-qasam). Just as (the Messenger of God) said – May God pray over him and give him greetings: (describing the one who arrives at this Station): «Tousled and covered in dust, who has only two rags, and he doesn't pay attention to him: but when he swears by God he keeps his oath»[73].

He then arrives at the Station of Détente and Dispute (maqâm al-inbisât wa-l-mujâdala), which is the Station of (Abraham), the Friend of God (al-khalîl)[74] – God's prayers and Peace be about him – for God said: «And when the fear of Abraham was dissipated and the good news came to him, he began to dispute with Us for the people of Lot» (Cor. 11: 74)[75]. The Prophet – may God pray for him and greet him – said in fact: «I am amazed at the dispute between the servant and his Lord!»[76]. However, while al-Khalîl disputed (with God) out of pity for creatures, the mere servant disputes because he is in pain for himself.

Finally he becomes a nuncio (dâ'î). The announcement is of various kinds: there are those who call to God Most High, and those who call

to the example of the Messenger (sunna) that is, to the fulfillment of the norms (ahkâm, of the Law). The nuncio who calls to God Most High invites us to know the Truth, through sincerity and truthfulness. This corresponds to having annihilated (fanâ') every 'proper participation' (huzûz) and every distinctive sign[77]. God Most High says: «Call men to the Way of the Lord, through wisdom, and good admonitions» (Cor. 16: 125); the nuncio is therefore called wise (hakîm) and warner (wâ'iz). (And again) God Most High says to his nuncio: «[O Prophet, we have sent you as a witness and herald and warning] and as a voice that calls to God, with His permission, and as a radiant lamp» (Cor. 23: 46 -47). And here He clothes the nuncio with the ornament of the Prophecy.

In fact, when he has truly made the Way to God, (He) will make him reach the Station of Union (maqâm al-wusla) and of reunification with Him (al-ittisâl bihi). This means that he has reached the station of what the True wants from him, and here he joins in His satisfaction for him.

For each nuncio there is who responds and who follows. The one who announces God Most High (al-dâ'î ilâ Allâh) has fewer followers than the others due to the highness ('izza) of his authority. Instead, whoever calls to walk the way towards Him (al-dâ'î ilâ sabîliHi) has more than the first, in accordance with the inferiority of his rank. The one who then calls to the sunna has even more followers than the others, since it is a condition that involves the soul (inferior, nafs), and is closely linked to actions (af'âl).

The science of Sufism revolves around three aspects: the Science of Servitude ('ilm al-'ubudiyya), the Science of Gnosis ('ilm al-ma'rifa), and the Science of Dominical Reality ('ilm al-rabbâniyya) .

The Science of Dominical Reality has as its object the implementation of the Will and of the Decrees (of God); the Science of Gnosis is the language with which the ritual action (mu'âmala) is expressed, accompanied by boasting; the Science of Servitude has as its object the act of possession (divine) which is carried out through coercion (on the slave).

Thus it is handed down from Junayd - God have mercy on him: «The beginning of Sufism is to discern the instant and examine it, and to respect the norms that are imposed on you, in that and in all the other instants, so that not a single when one is not engaged in the performance of one's duty, and without leaving time for rest". No one has access to Sufism if any effort (mujâhada) or devout exercise (riyâda) remains (to be made). One enters Sufism only after making every attempt in the perfect performance of ritual acts, with sincerity, and exercising control over spiritual states.

It is said that Junayd once said: "Your heart will not reach the profound sense of divine Oneness (rûh al-tawhîd) if He still has a right against you that you have not honored". Similarly, when asked about the one who has nothing left of the lower world except what one gets by sucking a date bone, he said: "The mukâtab is a servant who has not a single dirham left"[78].

And so, when (the aspirant) is up to these premises, in a general sense, but without exceptions, he enters Sufism. Sufism has three stations: spiritual good manners, moral virtues, inner states. Good manners are acquired; the moral virtues are taken as a model; inner states are a gift.

Among the various aspects of spiritual education there is the humiliation of the soul, since in fact in order to honor one's soul more than anything else one loses interest in the spiritual life (dîn). Then there is the renunciation of this low world and the prohibition of the soul to satisfy its desires; then following the teaching of a guide who advises rightly (imâm nâsih), and accepting what he recommends. So fill the spiritual instants with what is most appropriate; the exaltation of the honor of the Muslims, ardently desiring to be at the devoted service of the spiritual masters (khidmat al-mashâykh), ceasing to seek facilitations (in the ritual, rukhas) by exploiting the different opinions of the scholars ('ulamâ'); knowing how to discern when considering opposites, going to the markets as little as possible, avoiding the company of worldly men and having relations with them, correcting companions with kindness, feeling ashamed in asking, holding back the tongue from uttering harsh words, having the blessed places as a destination; abandon the company of those who persevere in the condition of legal impurity (suhbat al-ahdâth), avoid the company of women, avoid hoarding, imitate the model of the ancient Pious (salaf)[79] and their conduct, know just enough about Law for a correct religious practice, banning the words "I", "we", "we did" and the like from the language, submitting any uncertainty to the examination of the Book and the sunna, in case one belongs to the learned, otherwise one he will have to address his own Imâm, and so on, because the description of all spiritual "good manners" would be too long.

Among the moral virtues of the Sufis are goodness of character, generosity, modesty, forbearance, unceasing melancholy, profuse weeping over past sins, accepting with pleasure the decrees of fate (ahkâm), the avoidance of notoriety that is acquired due to religious piety, the frankness of intentions in obedience, the perfect independence (istighnâ') from beings, the absolute necessity (iftiqâr) of God, the strength of the heart (quwwa al -qalb) in ordering the

good (al-amr bi-l-ma'rûf), scruple (wara'), nobility of mind, preference for an insignificant social condition, knowledge of the justifications advanced by the soul, striving for chivalrous virtue (muruw'a), contentment, thoughtfulness, composure, outward joy and inward awe.

If one has complied with these rules of conduct and if one has conformed to these moral virtues, God Most High will then grant splendid spiritual states, such as renunciation (zuhd), devoted scruple (wara'), trusting entrustment (tawakkul), surrendering everything to God (tafwîd), submission (taslîm), sincerity (ikhlâs), certainty (yaqîn), fear of God (khawf), truthfulness (sidq), wisdom (ma' rifa), longing (shawq), familiarity (uns), synthesis (jam'), differentiation (tafarruqa), extinction (fanâ'), permanence (baqâ'), contrition (qabd), expansion (bast), refreshment (tabrîd), ardor (talhîb), contemplation (mushâhada), intimate conversation (muhâdatha), spiritual conversation (mukâlama), the Station of the science of Certainties ('ilm al -yaqîn), of the vision of Certainty ('ayn al-yaqîn) and of the reality of Certainty (haqq al-yaqîn); the knowledge of unknown knowledge (al'ilm al-majhûl), the mastery of the written Book (al-kitâb almarqûm)[80], and so on among the elevated spiritual states: we ask the Most High God to grant them to us, to count us among those who are worthy, not to deprive ourselves of what God grants to the best of His people, of His bountiful favor, of His precious mercy. In truth He is the one who listens (al-Samî'), the one who listens (al-Mujîb).

Pray to God upon our lord Muhammad and upon his family, and grant them abundantly Peace.

[1] Tawfîq: the divine “assistance” or “favor”. It is reported by Dhû-l-Nûn al-Misrî: «Divine assistance is recognized by three signs: falling on one's feet when one acts without being ready; to escape from error even when one is forced to and one does not even try to avoid it; obtain a result from prayer and fervent request» (Ibn 'Arabî, La vie merveilleuse de Dhû-l-Nûn l'Egyptien, transl. fr. R. Deladrière, Paris 1988, p. 115).

[2] Ghafla: the "negligence", the "carelessness", or rather the "inattentiveness" inherent in the human condition, is the characteristic condition of Adam who forgot that he had stipulated the Covenant with God: «And we already made a covenant from before with Adam, but he forgot him and we did not see in him firmness of purpose” (Cor. 20: 115). See M. Chodkiewicz, Un Ocean sans rivage, Paris 1992, p. 153.

[3] The methods of "clarification of the soul and purification of the heart" (tazkiya alnafs wa tasfiya al-qalb) are amply illustrated in the works of many masters of Sufism; they are primarily intended to clarify the soul from its inherent rebelliousness, and to purify the heart of man so that it becomes bound to nothing but God. Cf. JGJ ter Haar, Follower and Heir of the Prophet. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindî as Mystic, Leiden 1992, pp. 47, 91.

[4] In the Sufi vocabulary it is called suhba, or "spiritual company", the relationship between the aspirant and the master, which represents one of the fundamental pillars of the practice of Tasawwuf. Within this relationship the master imparts the basic teachings of the way to the aspirant who enters his service. In addition to the suhba, the other aspects of this bond are represented by the investiture of the khirqa, the initiatory dress, and by the bestowal of the dhikr, the

mention of the remembrance of God. See A. Schimmel, Le Soufisme ou les dimensions mystiques de l'Islam , p. 135. One of the ancient teachers of Sufism had said: "The company of the People of Integrity brings about integrity, while the company of the people of corruption brings about corruption"; Thaqafî also said: «Whoever accompanies great men without showing deference and respect is excluded from their hearts, from the blessing of their looks and none of their lights will be manifested on him» (Ja'far Sajjâdî, Farhang-i lughât va istilâhât va ta'bîrât-i 'irfânî, Tehran 1356 H.sh., p. 299). For Qushayrî the suhba is of three types: «Companion with one who holds a higher spiritual degree, which is in reality devoted service; companionship with one who is of lower spiritual condition; it imposes on the first pity and mercy towards the second, and on the second concord and respect towards the first. Then companionship with those who are similar and of equal rank, which is based on the practice of preferring others to oneself (îthâr) and on spiritual chivalry (futuwwa). Whoever accompanies a master who is superior to him in spiritual dignity and rank, should have the good habit of abandoning all controversy, accepting what comes from him with good cheer and meeting his states with faith» (Risâla, p. 146) .

[5] Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî (800 ca.-874 AD), legendary Sufi figure, famous for his sayings and his shatahât, the theopathic locutions. Junayd said of him: "He has the same rank among us that Gabriel has among the angels." On him see A. Schimmel, Le Soufisme, pp. 70-75; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 106-108; Qushayrî, Risâla, pp. 14-16; Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 67-74.

[6] Since ancient times four fundamental disciplines were developed to dominate the lower soul (al-nafs al-'ammara bi-l-sû', lit.: "the soul that instigates evil") and lead it towards the state of inner stillness (nafs mutma'inna): hunger (jû'), vigil (sahr), silence (samt) and solitude ('uzla), disciplines which also constitute the initial tests of

the education of the aspirants. See Ghazâlî, Kitâb Riyâdat al-nafs. (Ihyâ' 'ulûm al-dîn, book XXII), transl. eng. edited by TJ Winter, On Disciplining the Soul, Cambridge 1995, pp. xxixxxxii, 88-90; and also A. Schimmel, Le Soufisme, p. 150.

[7] Withdrawal (khalwa) and isolation ('uzla) are considered the two conditions, the interior and the exterior, of detachment from the world. The khalwa is the period of retreat, generally lasting forty days, in which the disciple isolated himself in meditation under the strict supervision of his master. He had to consider the dark room (khalwa) in which he retired (also called chillakhâneh in Eastern Sufism, where it was often underground) as a tomb, and his own garment (khirqa) as a shroud, in view of a spiritual rebirth. The aim was to achieve intimacy with the True (al-Haqq) through isolation from the world. Qushayrî recounts: «I heard Shaykh Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî say: I heard Abû 'Uthmân al-Maghribî say that those who prefer spiritual retreat (khalwa) to company (suhba), it is better free himself from all remembrance except the remembrance (dhikr) of his Lord; let him be free from all desires except that of wanting the satisfaction (ridâ') of his Lord; let him be free from the claims of the soul on all causes of sustenance (asbâb).' He also recounts: «I heard Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî say, that Abû Bakr al-Râzî said: I heard Abû 'Amr al-Anmâtî who said: I heard Junayd say: whoever wishes to submit to his religion , rest his body and his heart, isolate himself from the people, for this is a time of desolation, and he who is endowed with intellect prefers solitude" (Qushayrî, Risâla, pp. 54-56).

[8] Hadîth transmitted by Tabarânî, cf. Haythami, Mu'jam al-zawâ'id, X, 346, and Kashf al-khafâ, II, 378-379. A similar version of this prophetic saying appears in Nawawî, Riyâd al-sâlihîn, Beirut 1986, p. 189. transl. it. Nawawî, The Garden of the Devotees, edited by A.

Scarabel, Trieste 1990, p. 143. See also Forûzânfar, Ahâdîth va qisas-i Masnavî, Tehran 1376 H.sh., p. 296.

[9] Repentance (tawba) is the first of the stations (maqâmât) of the Way of Sufism. There is unanimity in affirming that Repentance is a gift that God bestows on His servant. In it there are many aspects: Qushayrî reports, with a chain of transmission that reaches Junayd through Sulamî, that the latter said: «Repentance has three meanings: the first is regret (nadam); the second, the firm will never to repeat what God has forbidden; the third is to hasten to make reparation for misdeeds" (Qushayrî, Risâla, pp. 50-51). Instead, he said about Dhû-l-Nûn repentance: «"There are two types of repentance, the repentance of the return (tawba al-inâba) and the repentance of shame (tawba al-istihyâ'). The first is repentance which occurs out of fear of divine punishment; the second is the repentance that occurs out of shame in the face of divine Mercy". The repentance of fear is caused by the revelation of the Divine Majesty; repentance of shame is caused by the appearance of Beauty. Those who are ashamed are drunk; those who are afraid are sober" (Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 299).

[10] In his commentary on the Koran, regarding this verse, Sulamî reports through Ja'far al-Khuldî that Junayd said: «I went to Sarî (al-Saqatî) and saw that he was restless; he said to me: "A young man from the people of Baghdâd came to me, asked me for an explanation on repentance and I answered him. He then asked me: – What is your inner reality (haqîqatuhâ)? – I told him: that you don't forget what you regretted for. The boy said to me: - It's not like that!" I said to Sarî: "The young man is right"; and he said to me: "But how can this be?" (I replied): "After being in the station of vulgarity (jafâ') I was transported to that of purity (safâ'). Reminding me of vulgarity in purity was demeaning"» (Sulamî, Zyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr. The Minor Qur'ân Commentary of Abû 'Abd ar-Rahmân Muhammad ibn al-

Husayn as-Sulamî. edition and introduction by G. Böwering, Beirut 1995, pp. 16-17). On Sarî al-Saqatî, see infra note 14 p. 115.

[11] Hadîth reported by Daylamî, Al-Firdaws, IV, 69; according to this version: "God has not fashioned His intimate friend except in generosity and goodness of character"; handed down from 'A'isha, based on a weak transmission (da'îf). Darâqutnî in Ajwâd also reports it; see Kashf al-khafâ', II, 185.

[12] Hadîth reported by Muslim, Birr 104, 105, Adab 80; Tirmidhi, Birr 46; Ibn Hanbal, I, 384, 393, 440.

[13] Sulamî comments in his tafsîr: «Said one of them (of the Sufis). The hearts of believers are of three types: a martyr heart, a dead heart, and an undefiled heart. The martyred heart has withdrawn from the affairs of this world and its pleasures; the dead heart has withdrawn from creation and its ties to it; the uncontaminated heart is the one that does not contemplate, together with Allâh, anyone else but Him» (Ziyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, pp. 112-113).

[14] Ibn al-'Arîf defines the Will as: «The adornment of ordinary men ('awâmm). It consists in concentrating all efforts in view of God, may He be exalted! With determination and applying oneself in seeking Him. However, in the Path of exceptional people (khawwâs) this is already an imperfection, a separation from God (tafarruq) and a return to secondary causes (asbâb) and to one's own individuality. The will of the creature is, in fact, his own desire, which is at the root of every claim; but essential union and spiritual realization (al-jam' wa-lwujûd) are only obtained through what God Himself wants from the servant, not through what the servant wants» (Ibn al-'Arîf,

Mahâsin al-majâlis , Italian translation edited by P. Urizzi, Sedute Mistiche, Giarre 1995, pp. 79-80).

[15] Hadîth reported by Bukhârî, Tawhîd 34; Da'wât 5, 6, 8; Wudu' 75; Muslim, Dhikr 56, 57; Abû Dawud, Adab 98; Tirmidhî, Da'wât 16, 116, Dârimî, Isti'dhân 51; Ibn Hanbal, IV, 285, 290, 296, 299, 300, 302.

[16] The tawakkul is one of the most important stations on the Way of the Sufis. This is the condition in which one entrusts oneself directly and completely to God alone, without any mediation of creatures, and this also and above all in the ordinary necessities of life. For Shiblî it "consists in being in relation to God as if you had never existed, and as if God, in relation to you, had never ceased to be". In this regard, see Ghazâlî, The divine uniqueness and confident abandonment, edited by F. Pipoli and P. Urizzi, Rimini 1995. Sulamî, Introduction to Sufism, Turin 2002, pp. 51-62. Ibn al-'Arîf, Mystical Sessions, pp. 87-90. Qushayrî, Risâla, pp 82-88.

[17] The karâmât or the miraculous graces, are the external manifestations of man who has reached the maximum proximity with God. See in this regard, Kalâbâdhî, Al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf, transl. it. Sufism in the words of the ancients, edited by P. Urizzi, Palermo 2002, pp. 131-142.

[18] Hadîth reported by Bukhârî, Îmân 39; Muslim, Musâqâ 107; Ibn Maja, Fitan 14; Dârimî, Buyû' 1.

[19] Hadîth whose origin cannot be known.

[20] Hadîth qudsî on which there is wide agreement, transmitted by Tabarânî and Bazzâr. Cf. Kashf al-khafâ', II, 333; see also Nawawî, Riyâd al-sâlihîn, p. 507; transl. it. The Garden of the Devotees, p. 390.

[21] The concentration of the teacher on the disciple as a channel of spiritual influence is also called tawajjuh. In the Naqshbandî order, in particular, the practice of transmitting the spiritual influence from master to disciple, through the concentration of the shaykh on the heart of the murîd, is followed by the practice of concentration of the murîd on the figure of the shaykh, which is a further sign of bond (rabita) that has been established between the two. See JGJ ter Haar, Follower and Heir of the Prophet, p. 84. A. Sirhindî, The Beginning and the Return, Milan 2003, pp. 31, 107. M. Chodkiewicz, "Quelques aspects des techniques spirituelles dans la Tariqa Naqshbandiyya", in Naqshbandis, cheminement et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman, edited by M. Gaborieau, A. Popovich, Th. Zarcone, Istanbul 1994.

[22] Qushayrî says : «It is what takes your heart by surprise with the force of the instant that is not caused by something you have accomplished» (Risâla, p. 44).

[23] Abû Bakr (d. 634 AD) was the most trusted of the Prophet's companions; he was his father-in-law and together with him Muhammad made the migration (hijra) from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD. When Muhammad died Abû Bakr took over the leadership of the community of Medina and was the first caliph in the history of Islam.

[24] Hadîth transmitted with some variant from Tirmidhî, Manâqib 60, on the authority of 'Umar, classified as hasan sahîh; then by Abû Dâwud, Zakât 40, and by Hâkim, I, 414. See Sarrâj, Kitâb al-Luma' p. 596, ed. by AH Mahmûd and TH 'Abd al-Bâqî. See Sulamî, Kitâb al-Arba'în fî-l-tasawwuf, in Majmû'e-yi âthâr-i 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî, p. 3.

[25] Muhammad ibn Mûsâ Abû Bakr al-Wâsitî (d.320/932) also known as Ibn Farghânî, Sufi master originally from Ferghana; he was one of the companions of Junayd and Abû al-Husayn al-Nûrî. He settled in Khurasân and lived and died in the city of Merv. See about him Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 302-306; Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 26.

[26] Words spoken by Abû Bakr at the death of Muhammad. See M. Lings, The Prophet Muhammad. His life according to the oldest sources, Turin 2004, p. 353. This same saying of Wâsitî, which reports the words of Abû Bakr, is in Sulamî's commentary on the Koranic verse 3:144: "Wâsitî said: 'The intellects were bewildered at the time of Muhammad's death, with the exception of the intellect of a single man, who was chosen among them; this was Abû Bakr who called to God for certain knowledge and it was as if that verse had descended especially for him. The community was unable to react due to weakness, discouragement and disorientation; therefore the merit of Abû Bakr, - may God be pleased with him for this - was due to his saying: - Whoever wanted to venerate Muhammad - pray to God over him and give him greetings - well (know that) now Muhammad is dead" » (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 122).

[27] Verse revealed in the aftermath of the battle of Uhud, a place near Medina, which took place in about 625. AD. On that occasion the polytheistic Meccans massacred the Muslim Medinese; many of the

Companions fell and Muhammad himself was wounded in the face. Many thought at the time that he had been killed in battle.

[28] 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb (d. 644 AD) was also a companion and father-in-law of the Prophet. After Abû Bakr's death he became caliph in his stead in 634.

[29] Sa'd ibn Abî Waqqâs, one of the Companions of the Prophet who converted at the age of twenty-seven, participated in the battles of Badr and Uhud, was sent by 'Umar to lead the Arab army which defeated the Persians in the battle of Qâdisiyya in about 637 AD. He died in 55/674 AD

[30] Hadîth reported in the major canonical collections: Bukhârî, Janâ'iz 36; Manâqib al-ansâr 49; Muslim, Wasiyya 7, 8; Abû Dâwud, Farâ'id 3; Tirmidhî, Janâ'iz 6, etc.. Sa'd ibn Abî Waqqâs recounts that when he was ill with an illness that was leading to his death, the Prophet went to see him and he said to him: «O Messenger of God, I am very rich and I have no other heirs except a daughter. Shall I give alms two-thirds of my possessions?" The Prophet answered no. "Then half?" The Prophet again answered no. "One third?" The Prophet replied: «A third, but even a third is a lot! Better to spend your inheritance on enriching your family than forcing them to beg from people!" (Nawawî, Riyâd al-sâlihîn, pp. 6-7, Italian transl. Il Giardino dei Devoti, p. 5: the Italian translation of the hadîth is incomplete due to a layout error).

[31] Hadîth transmitted by Tabarânî and Hâkim from 'Abd Allâh ibn Basar, by 'Abd ibn Hamîd, Abî ibn Sa'îd and Ibn 'Asâkir, classified as hasan; see Mu'jam al-zawâ'id, X, 20; Kashf al-khafâ', II, 48-49.

[32] In his commentary on Sura 39, Sulamî reports the words of Wâsitî who, commenting on verse 22: «He whose breast God has opened to submission to Him» says verbatim that: «The light that dilates is a sublime light that not all they can bear, but only those who are supported by divine care and guardianship, since care preserves the limbs and the person, while guardianship preserves interior realities and spirits" (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 196).

[33] Hadîth reported by Hâkim, IV, 311. The complete saying ends with the sentence: «And be ready for death before it arrives». See also Ghazâlî, Al-Munqidh min al-dalâl; "Salvation from error" in Selected writings of al-Ghazâlî, edited by L.Veccia Vaglieri and R. Rubinacci, Turin 1970, p. 85.

[34] Four levels of inner depth are listed here, each of these corresponds to a ritual action and a particular degree of awareness; the more internal the level, the deeper the knowledge. This is part of the traditional "physiology" of Sufism on which to see: D. Giordani, "The secrets of the heart and its lights: the organ of knowledge in Sufism", in Perennia Verba, n. 6-7, 2002-2003.

35 Al-Habîb is the name of Muhammad.

36 Hadith reported by Bukhari, Tawhîd 34, Da'wât 5, 6, 8, Wudu' 75; Muslim, Dhikr 56, 57, 68; Abu Dawud, Adab 8; Nasâ'î, Zakat 1, 73; Ibn Majah, Du'â' 15; Darrimî, Isti'dhân 51; Ibn Hanbal, IV, 285, 290, 292, ecc.

[37] Al-Khalîl is the nickname of Abraham. In this regard it was said by one of the Sufis: «None of the Prophets has attained perfection in submission (taslîm) and trust (tafwîd) except the "Beloved of God" (al-habîb, i.e. Muhammad) and the ' “Friend of God” (al-khalîl, i.e. Abraham). It is for this reason that even the greatest despair of reaching perfection, despite their degree of Proximity (qurba) and the realization of contemplation» (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 127).

[38] In this clarification there is a clear reference to the Sufi doctrine of the Holy War (jihâd al-nafs) fought against the lower soul, or rather against "the soul that urges evil" (al-nafs al-ammâra bi -l-sû'), which is the main commitment of the murîd struggling with his instincts. The formulation of this doctrine is often derived from some famous prophetic sayings. To someone returning from battle the Prophet said: "You have returned from the small holy war to the great holy war." They asked him: "O Messenger of God, what is the great holy war (al-jihâd al-akbar)?" «The fight against the soul». The spiritual meaning of jihâd is also confirmed in this other saying: "True jihâd is what one fights against the soul in order to obey God" (Ibn Hanbal, VI, 20). Also according to this doctrine the one who succumbs on the field of this battle against "the soul that exhorts to evil", or who has conquered himself and has completely dissolved his lower attributes through extinction (fanâ'), becomes a martyr (shahîd) of Love, literally a “contemplative witness”. Dhû-l-Nûn Misrî said: "God does not see a thing but it perishes, and God does not see anything but it lives, for His life is eternal and whoever sees it is made everlasting through him" (Ibn ' Arabî, La vie merveilleuse de Dhû-l-Nûn l'Egyptien, pp. 164-165). Regarding the Koranic verse on martyrdom which reads: «Do not think of those who have been killed on the Way of God that they are dead, they are living with their Lord and well supplied» (Cor. 3: 169), Sulamî comments on the words of Ibn 'Atâ', who explains: «He who is killed because of contemplation (mushâhada) is made perennial by the vision of which he witnessed. The dead is the one who lives by looking at himself and indulging his

inclinations» (Sulamî, Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 125). See also Kalâbâdhi, Ta'arruf, pp. 232-235.

[39] Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî said in this regard: «The last degree to which the confirmers of the Truth (siddiqîn) reach constitutes the beginning of the spiritual states of the Prophets; as for the last degree to which the Prophets reach, its end is inconceivable" (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 126). According to Ghazâlî and many other Sufis, the Siddiqiyya is the highest degree of holiness accessible to men, which is the degree of Abû Bakr al-Siddîq, who was the human being closest to the Prophet in qualities and aptitudes; for Ibn 'Arabî, on the other hand, there is an even higher station which is found in an intermediate position between the Siddiqiyya and the station of the Prophets, and it is the "station of Proximity" (maqâm al-qurba) which is the station of the Afrâd, called also the muqarrabûn, the "close", which is also the last of the degrees of the hierarchy of saints. See M. Chodkiewicz, Le Sceau des Saints, Paris 1986, p. 77.

[40] Abû Yazîd once said: «For thirty thousand years I flew in the spaces of the Unity of the Most High; for another thirty thousand years I flew in the spaces of His being; for another thirty thousand years I flew in the spaces of His greatness and His majesty. After flying like this for ninety thousand years, I found myself at the first maqâm of the Prophets and I received such an impulse that it is impossible to describe it. At that moment I thought: "No one has ever reached higher". I immediately realized that my head was under the feet of a Prophet. I understood then that the last maqâm of the saints began where the first maqâm of the Prophets began and only the Most High knew where the last maqâm of the Prophets was» ('Attâr, Tadhkirat al-awliyâ'. Parole di Sufi, Milan 1994, p 200).

[41] In the appendix to his commentary on the Koran, the author took up the words of Salmân al-Fârisî who allegedly said about the verse: «The lowest of the stations of the Prophecy is the highest degree of the True Ones; the lowest of the stations of the Veridici is the highest of the abodes of the Martyrs; the lowest of the abodes of the Martyrs is the highest of the ranks of the Saints. The Saints are on the scales of the Martyrs; the Martyrs on the balance of the Veridici; the Truthful on the scales of the Prophets; the Prophets on the balance of the Messengers» (Sulamî, Ziyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, p. 33).

[42] Abû-l-Qâsim al-Kharrâz al-Junayd (d. 909 AD) one of the most important masters of Sufism, known as «the lord of the spiritual tribe» (ie the Sufis). On him see note 20, p.15.

[43] Qushayrî reports that one day Junayd was asked about the difference between the murîd and the murâd and he replied: «The government of Science is concerned with the murîd and the guardianship of the Truth is concerned with the murâd – may he be exalted! –; the murîd walks while the murâd flies. When will the one who walks ever catch up with the one who flies?" Below Qushayrî quotes some words that Sulamî traces back to Junayd: «As for the difference between murîd and murâd, well, each of those who desire is in reality also one who is desired (by God), because if it were not for the intent (murâd) of God - Powerful and Exalted - for which He desires it, he would never have desired it, since nothing is if not what God Most High wants. Every murâd is also a murîd since if the True desires someone in a particular way, it also grants him the will (irâda)» (Risâla, p. 102). The same type of considerations is contained in Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, pp. 267-270.

[44] In Sufi brotherhoods it is customary for the elders to support the figure of the initiating master, acting as a guide and advising those who occupy a marginal position in the order, or who are in the early stages of the journey.

[45] Hadîth reported by Tabarânî, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar and Anas, cf. Mu'jam al-zawâ'id, VIII, 89, and Munâwî, Fayd al-qadîr, III, 13.

[46] In the Islamic tradition the Jâhiliyya is the period of ignorance that preceded the revelation of the Koran.

[47] Sulamî states that according to Ibn 'Atâ' the verse means: «'Those who will strive for Our satisfaction, We will guide them to reach the abode of Satisfaction (ridwân)'. Junayd was asked about the same verse and he said, "Those who will strive for Repentance (tawba), We will guide them on the path of Sincerity (ikhlâs)." Said one of the Sufis: "Effort (juhd) consists in lowering the gaze, in keeping the tongue and the whims of the heart in check; all of this is the exit from the habits of human nature". Ja'far al-Sâdiq then said: "Whoever fights himself for himself attains the magnanimity of his Lord; whoever fights himself for his Lord attains his Lord'". 'Abd al-'Azîz al-Makkî, paraphrasing the verse, said: «Effort on the external path (zâhir) and (He) will guide you on the internal path (bâtin). I marvel at the one who is incapable of dealing with his external reality and aspires to the internal one» (Haqâ'iq altafsîr, I, 120-122).

[48] Perhaps it is Muhammad ibn 'Aliyyân al-Nasawî originally from Nasâ, city of Khurâsân. See Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 417–419. In the

news that Sulamî gives of this Persian master, neither the date of his birth nor that of his death appear.

[49] Hadîth reported in a similar version by Ibn Hanbal, II, 390-391.

[50] Sulamî reports the words of an anonymous Sufi who paraphrases the verse saying: «Do not alienate from you who has made himself attractive with the adornment of servitude, We have arranged his life so that he would approach Us» (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 200).

[51] See note 3 pp. 1099-110.

[52] The same themes on poverty in this paragraph appear in the comment that Sulamî makes on verse 2: 273. «Junayd was asked when, (according to a famous hadîth), the sincere faqîr becomes worthy to enter paradise five hundred years before of the rich man. He replied: “When the faqîr acts towards God in accord with Him in all his states, in deprivation or in prosperity, and regards the poverty sent to him by God as a grace, and fears for its cessation as the rich fear for the end of his wealth. Patient, satisfied, happy that God has chosen poverty for him, protects his religion, hides his poverty, shows his displeasure with the people, is satisfied with his Lord in his condition of poverty, as the Mighty and Exalted: 'to those poor who became such in God's Way'. When the faqîr possesses these qualities, he will enter paradise five hundred years before the rich"» (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 81-82).

[53] Regarding the spiritual meaning of poverty Junayd said that: «True poverty consists in emptying the heart of phenomenal forms»

(Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 27). In the Risâla of Qushayrî, Sulamî also reports a saying on poverty attributed to Yahyâ ibn Muâ'dh al-Râzî: «The essential Reality (of poverty) is not being satisfied by anyone other than God, its external sign is the absence of any means of subsistence» (Risâla, p. 134). Again on the same subject Ruwaym ibn Muhammad said: «Poverty consists in the lack of all that exists and in the renunciation of all that is lost» (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 175).

[54] Hadîth reported by Tabarânî with a chain of transmission defined as "weak" (da'îf). See Kashf al-khafâ', II, 107-108. There is in the Risâla of Qushayrî an interesting commentary by Abû 'Alî al-Daqqâq; when they asked him for an explanation about this hadîth he said: «The defect of a thing and its opposite strictly depend on the excellence and value of that thing; the more excellent a thing is in itself, the more its opposite and its defect are worse. So is faith, since it is the noblest of virtues, its opposite is disbelief (kufr). Similarly, unbelief being the danger of poverty, this indicates that it is the noblest of qualities» (Risâla, p. 136).

[55] Sulamî quotes as a commentary on this verse a sentence of Ja'far al-Sâdiq: «You are the poor because of the humility of servitude, and God is the rich because of the glory of the Lordship. Lordship in fact implies enslavement and conquest, servitude the condition of submission and resignation» (Zyâdât Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, p. 136).

[56] The Rich (al-Ghanî) is one of the names of God that appears very frequently in the Koran, e.g.: «As for whoever rejects the faith, well God is the Rich and has no need of the Worlds» (Cor. 3 : 97). This Name expresses, according to Muslim theology, the extreme transcendence of the Essence of God and His Being necessary in itself

(wâjib al-wujûd li-dhâtihi). See Râzî, Traité sur les Noms Divins, edited by M. Gloton, Beirut, 2000, p. 589.

[57] The term walâya or wilâya (the unvoiced text does not allow a distinction between the two terms) has many meanings in Arabic; in addition to "friendship" it also means "protection", "authority", "government", but also "holiness".

[58] Hadîth reported by Nasâ'î, Isti'âdha 14, 16; Ibn Hanbal, II, 305, 320, 354; with some variations in Abû Dâwud, Adab 101; Nasâ'î, Sahw 90; Ibn Hanbal, V, 36, 39, 42, 44.

[59] See note 54, p. 67.

[60] Hadîth reported by Bukhârî, Riqâq 15; Muslim, Zakat 120; Tirmidhi, Zuhd 40; Ibn Maja, Zuhd 9; Ibn Hanbal, II, 243, 261, 315, etc., with slightly different text.

[61] Râbi'a al-'Adawiyya (c. 713-801 AD) the most famous of the Sufi women. On her see I detti di Râbi'a, edited by C. Valdré, Milan 1979.

[62] Literally “neither the vastness of the world nor its narrowness”.

[63] This is Muhammad ibn Sulaymân al-Naysâbûrî (d. 989 AD) one of the masters of Sulamî.

[64] It can also be understood: «Whoever does not have mercy on the young among us, and does not venerate the elderly among us, is not one of us». Hadîth reported by Tirmidhî, Birr 15; Abû Dâwud, Adab 58; Ibn Hanbal, I, 257; II, 185, 207, 222; V, 328.

[65] Hadith reported by Bukhari, Isti'dhân 22, Adab 35; Muslim, Birr 47; Abu Dawud, Adab 10; Tirmidhi, Isti'dhân 12; Ibn Mâja, Adab 9, ecc.

[66] Cf. hadith reported by Tirmidhi, Salat 110; Nasa'i, Sahw 41.

[67] Hadith reported by Bukhari, Adhan 18, Adab 27; Dârimi, Salat 42; Ibn Hanbal, vol. V, 53.

[68] Qabd and bast: in the terminology of Sufism they are two terms that originate from the Koranic verse: «God tightens and loosens, and to Him you will all be returned» (Cor. 2: 245). Qushayrî explains in his commentary on the Koran: «It is said that God tightens hearts when He withdraws from them, and that He expands them when He approaches instead. It is called contraction (qabd) when the hearts are overwhelmed by fear (khawf); expansion (bast) when instead hope (rijâ') dominates them. It is called contraction because of His subjugation, expansion because of His mercy. It is called contraction because of His concealment; expansion for His unveiling. It is said that contraction is for the aspirants (lil-murîdîn) and that expansion is for the "desired" (lil-murâdîn). The contraction is said to be for the predecessors (lil-mutasâbiqîn) while the expansion is for the Gnostics (lil-'ârifîn). It is said that He loosened his grip on you and

then you relaxed. It is said that the contraction belongs to Him, and that the expansion is a gift meant for you. It is said that the contraction is for the one who moves away from the True and the expansion is for the one to whom the True is manifested» (Latâ'if al-ishârât, I, 190-191). The definition that Sulamî attributes to Junayd and that Qushayrî reports in his Risâla is of a different tenor: «The fear that Allâh inspires has contracted me and the hope that emanates from him has relaxed me. Essential Reality (haqîqa) has brought me together; the True (al-Haqq) divided me. When He contracted me through fear, He destroyed me (afnânî); and when he relaxed me with hope he sent me back to myself» (Risâla, p. 36).

[69] The Station of Liberty is in the technical vocabulary of the Sufis: «The liberation of the heart from the slavery of creation, from the accidents of this world and that other», from the slavery of the precariousness of the world, from the products of the imagination, from the flattery of destiny ; without demands, intent or purpose. Abû Bakr al-Shiblî (d. 945 AD) was asked: "Do you not know that He is Merciful?" He replied, "Of course I know! And since I have known His Mercy I have never asked Him to have mercy on me» (Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 109). According to Ibn 'Arabî, Freedom is nothing other than the station of the divine Essence (maqâm dhâtî), since It is "Independent of the Worlds" (ghaniyy 'an al-'alamîn) (Cor. 29: 6) and as such it is free from any link with the existing (Futûhât, chap. 140, II, 226-227). See also: “The Station of Freedom”, edited by WC Chittick, in Ibn 'Arabî, Les Illuminations de La Mecque (sous la direction de M. Chodkiewicz), Paris 1988, pp. 255-260).

[70] This is an evident reference to the rank of those who belong to the initiatory path of the Malâmatî, of which Sulamî was an eminent representative. Among the many definitions of the path that characterizes this particular group, there is that of 'Abd Allâh ibn Mubârak (d. 797 AD) which Sulamî reports in the Risâla al-

malâmatiyya: «They are people who do not show outward signs (of their own spirituality) towards creation and who inwardly has no claim to Allâh the Most High. Their secret is what they have with Allâh, Mighty and Magnificent, a secret that does not even appear to their understanding and their hearts» (The keepers of the secret, p. 23). Still on the Malamati, Sulamî reports a saying of Shâh Ibrâhîm ibn Shaybân al-Kirmânî (d. 949 AD), one of the masters of the Futuwwa: «Poverty is a secret that Allâh has given to the servant; if he hides it, he is trustworthy; if he shows it, he loses the name of faqîr» (ibid., p. 47).

[71] The muhâdatha is in the classic definitions of the Sufis, the discourse that God addresses to his chosen servants, through a sensitive support, as in the case of the call of the Burning Bush to Moses: «And when Moses came to Our meeting and his Lord had spoken with him, said Moses: “O Lord! Show yourself to me, that I may see you!" He answered: “You will not see me”» (Cor. 7: 118).

[72] The karâmât are extraordinary manifestations which can also be more commonly interpreted as "miracles". In the particular language of Sufism karâma means the manifestation of divine favour, generally in response to a supplication, through which God gratifies his chosen servants, and is always granted to a saint. With mu'jiza, on the other hand, we mean the miracle granted to a prophet to show the world the truthfulness of his message. Qushayrî relates that Sa'îd ibn Yahyâ al-Basrî said: "A group of Quraysh gathered at 'Abd al-Wâhid ibn Zayd, one day they came to him and said: 'Let us fear misery and need.' He then raised his head to heaven and said: "O God, I ask you by Your Name, O you who are the Exalting One (al-Murtafi'), by which you ennoble whoever you want among your saints and inspire purity in those whom You love: give us a sustenance that comes directly from You, that you cut the bonds of Satan from our hearts and from the hearts of these our companions, for You are the

Compassionate, the Gracious, the Eternal. Charity now! Oh my God, now!" I heard then, I swear! (wa-Llâhi!) – said Sa'îd ibn Yahyâ al-Basrî – a tinkling on the roof, then dirhams and dinâr were spilled on us. Then 'Abd al-Wâhid ibn Zayd said: "Be satisfied by God - Mighty and Exalted - and by none other than Him!" They took the coins, but 'Abd al-Wâhid ibn Zayd took nothing» (Risâla, p. 186).

[73] Hadîth reported by Hâkim, IV, 328; Abu Nu'aym, Hilya, I, 8; also reported by Muslim, Birr 40, in a slightly dissimilar version. In the version of the hadîth reported by Tirmidhî, Manâkib 54, direct reference is made to a companion of the Prophet named Barâ' ibn Mâlik. In Ibn Mâja, Zuhd 4, and Ibn Hanbal, III, 145; V, 407, it is better understood that the Prophet is speaking in this way of the "Kings" or of the "People of Paradise".

[74] That is the Prophet Abraham (see supra, n. 37, p. 57).

[75] The episode is that of the visit of the angels who announce the birth of Isaac to Sarah and inform him of the inevitable destruction of Lot's people. Sulamî explains that Abraham's fright had been determined by the refusal of the unknown guests to eat the roasted calf that he had prepared for them: «But when he saw that their hands did not touch him, he became suspicious of them and conceived fear. But they said to him: “Do not be afraid. We were sent to the people of Lot'” (Cor. 11:70). Having recovered from his fright, he then began to discuss the Order of God with them. Cf. Sulamî, Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, I, 221-222.

[76] Hadîth whose origin cannot be established.

[77] The fanâ' according to a classic definition, is the cessation of all reprehensible qualities in being and the affirmation of praiseworthy qualities in him. In one definition: «Extinction consists in the disappearance of all pleasure (huzûz), so that the servant no longer has any part in such a sensation. Because of his being extinguished from all things, all distinction ceases and he is henceforth solely occupied with what made him extinct» (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, pp. 231-232 et seq.).

[78] The mukâtab is a slave who signs a contract with his master according to which he is freed after paying an agreed price in installments. Sulamî evidently establishes an analogy with the condition of man in relation to God.

[79] The term is used to indicate the Companions of the Prophet and the Muslims of the first generations.

[80] See Cor. 83:9.

TREATISE ON THE STAGES OF THE WAY OF REAL MEN

Mas'ala darajât al-sâdiqîn

In the Name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

Pray to God about our lord Muhammad and his family.

He is enough for me.

Praise be to God, the Lord of the two Worlds, from beginning to end.

Pray to God upon Muhammad and his family, and multiply Peace upon him.

You asked – may God guide you to the right path, and help you in your search for the way to Him, remove doubt and uncertainty from your heart, and make you reach the highest of the ranks of aspirants (murîdîn) – the difference between Sufism (tasawwuf)[1], the Paths of Blame (turuq al-malâma)[2] and the path of the People of Love (sabîl ahl-il-mahabba)[3].

Know then - may God illumine your heart through the splendor of Unity - that these three names are definitions given according to the difference of spiritual stations and according to the different

possibilities (of realization). But know that each of the two Paths, that of Blame and that of the People of Love, is one of the stations of Sufism and one of its characteristic aspects.

The Sufis are those whom God Most High mentions in His Book, when, wanting to warn His Prophet, He says: «Reject not those who pray to their Lord morning and evening (for desire of His countenance)» (Cor. 6: 52)[4] . This means that they are the ones who call themselves 'the poor' (fuqarâ') because they know that the condition of need (faqr) corresponds to the condition of servitude ('ubûdiyya), just as the condition of self-sufficiency (ghinâ') corresponds to the condition of divine Lordship (rubûbiyya).

They are described by God Most High in His Book in these words: "And you must give to those poor who have become such in the way of God and who cannot walk the earth to trade; whoever is unaware of them believes them rich, for their dignified modesty. But you will recognize them by their distinguishing marks" (Cor. 2: 273)[5]. The signs that distinguish them are: maximum observance of the obligations imposed by religious practice (awâmir), acceptance of divine decrees (mawârid), acting with wisdom (bi-hikma) at all times.

God Most High describes them in another passage of His Book in which He, Noble and Exalted, says: «[Let the booty also be distributed] to the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and possessions because they sought the favor of God and His satisfaction [and they ran to the aid of God and His Messenger. It is they who are truly truthful!]» (Cor. 59: 8)[6]. This verse informs us about their nature, in other words that they relied neither on material possessions nor on any certainty, as their support and

reliance was only on the grace of God Most High.[7] They had been stripped of their deeds, individual qualities, words, invocations (adhkâr) and pious deeds: they found no satisfaction in any of these, nor did they even pay attention to them, since they had now extinguished (li-fanâ'ihim)[8] all their individual characteristics.

Among the examples of virtuous behavior (âdâb) which have led them to attain this Station and this spiritual degree, there is first of all the practice of the different kinds of spiritual exercises which they have imposed on themselves, precondition to this an effective repentance and a perfect renunciation, keeping away from creatures, from this lower world and its people, abandoning what was their property, moving away (hijrân) from customs and setting off on long journeys, opposing the desires induced by external reality and attentively keeping watch over the reality of their inner secrets (murâqaba al-asrâr al-bâtina), having regard for spiritual guides, putting themselves at the service of brothers and companions and preferring their company to themselves (îthâr), to their own soul and spirit, persevering in spiritual effort at all times, observing all that can transpire, internally or externally, of their actions or their spiritual states, with the eye of blame and discredit[9].

Elevation from this degree then depends on how much the soul wishes to entrust itself in all conditions to the Most High God (tawakkul). The lowest degree of surrender to God is the trust (thiqa) of receiving daily sustenance, while its true foundation is turning to God, Mighty and Exalted, for everything, seeing no adversaries or benefactors besides Him[10].

Over time, this trust becomes certainty (yaqîn), then it becomes trust in God; later one entrusts the care of one's affairs to Him, so that

trust becomes total resignation towards everything that emerges from the hidden reality (ghayb), be it a misfortune or a pleasure. Then comes patience (sabr) for suffering and affliction; then the acceptance of suffering with gratitude. After that we arrive at the state of tranquility in which we welcome the affliction without regret or complaint, as if we were in the condition of tranquility proper to well-being; finally, the state of affliction is more welcome than that of well-being. Then comes inner and outer satisfaction with what has been decreed by fate. Then comes respect for all Muslims, and attachment to the True and to the People of the True, externally and internally. Finally, creation is looked at with the eye of Truth. All these are the states of the stations of the aspirants (maqâmât ahwâl al-murîdîn).

Then comes the fear (khawf) that all that appeared to be a favor from God, was nothing but gradually being led astray (istidrâj), nothing but divine cunning (makr)[11]; then comes fear through the insufficiency of fear; then fear for lack of awareness for the insufficiency of fear; then the fear of lack of sincerity (about fear). After all this comes hope (rajâ'), and it is both the rejoicing of the heart at the favor which God has promised His servants, and the trust that by His benevolence He will eliminate the imperfections of these stations and heal the imperfections in them. places of corruption (mawâdi' al-fasâd).

Then comes the return from the end (nihâyat) (of the Way) to its beginning (bidâyat), after the aspirant has traversed again (these stations backwards), until he has perfected the way of the spiritual path (sulûk), and the explanation given by Truth (bayân al-Haqq fîhi) has not become clear to him.

Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî[12] meant this when he said: «Every time I deluded myself that I had reached the limit, I was told that this was the beginning». I then heard the master Abû 'Uthmân al-Maghribî[13] say: «Three times I have traveled the spiritual stations, and each time I have touched the extreme limit I have heard: "Send him back to the beginning, so that he does not remain ignorant!"» . Abû 'Uthmân said: «I questioned one of those who know the Truth about this subject and he answered me "It is like this for the one to whom one wishes to do good: he is postponed from the end to the beginning of the spiritual journey, to remove from him all inclination to ignorance and error"».

In this way one rises from the states of this Station up to a subtle state which allows us to distinguish true inspiration (ilhâm), the suggestions of the Evil One (al-waswâs), momentary thought (khâtir), natural disposition (taba 'a), wonder (karâma), illusion (ightirâr), certainty (yaqîn), being astray (istidrâj)[14]. These things are also part of the initial states of the people of the Way.

Then one reaches the condition of righteousness and stability (hâlat al-istiqâma): here one will remain together with God (ma'Allâh) for having achieved stability of the soul (nafs), stability of the intimate secret (sirr), stability of will (irâda), stability of natural instinct (tab'), stability of thoughts (khâtir), stability of reflection (tafakkur), stability from beginning to end.

This condition, in its entirety, befits no one else but the Prophet - be upon him God's blessing and peace - since God, Mighty and Exalted said: "Stay therefore on the straight path, as you are been ordained" (Cor. 11:112); and he (the Prophet) said to his people, when he knew the imperfection of their condition in relation to his: «Stand steadfast

on the right path without taking into account (the divine reward) (istaqîmû wa lan tuhsû)!»[15].

This is one of the states of servitude. The servant has no freedom to dispose of himself at all, except when he reaches the abode of loyalty (amâna); and even then it will have the ability to act only with the permission of its Master, in His Kingdom[16]. The servant will have no other aim than what has been arranged for him, and he will have no other aim than what is desired of him. After that his state will not be completed yet, since it can change with the change of the will of his Lord (al-Sayyîd).

Then the beginnings of the stations of knowledge (ma'rifa) appear. Knowledge is also one of the branches of Sufism, and is nothing but the extinction in the servant of God of all those states and stations, spiritual abodes and so on. In them it will manifest attributes that it has not realized, without being entirely without a state, but without being marked by a particular state. He will be purified, deprived (also) of himself and of his spiritual states and of what was attributed to him; and it is like what I heard 'Abd al-Wahîd ibn Muhammad say: "I heard Bundâr ibn al-Husayn say that, when asked about the meaning of the term sûfî, he replied: 'The Sufi (al-sûfiyu) is like one who has been healed ('alâ wazni 'ûfiya)"»[17]in other words he is one who has been purified (sûfiya) (by God) of all that he has attained, and who has come (to his being) from the expanses of light of the True (min bawâdî al-Haqq). Then his intimate secret (sirr) will be revealed and he will be able to travel through the transcendent realities, and what he will make known about them will be in perfect agreement with the unfolding of the divine decree (qadâ'). This is the kind of intuitive vision (firâsa)[18] about which the Prophet, be upon him God's blessings and peace, said: «Beware the discernment of the devout man (mu'min) for he perceives with the light of the True»[19].

At this point the wayfarer's state has purified to the point where he has direct knowledge of the ineffable reality (ghayb), as he had previously been informed about it. This is in the words of Siddîq al-Akbar (Abû Bakr) who announced to his daughter 'Â'isha shortly before his death: "Two brothers and two sisters", as he had full knowledge of what his mate was carrying: i.e. a daughter. This is the most subtle discernment (latîf al-ihkâm)[20].

All these are the initial stations of knowledge. The essential reality of knowledge (haqîqat al-ma'rifa) is the negation of all that is not the real object of knowledge (ma'rûf), which is the True (wa huwa al-Haqq). It has been handed down that Junayd, may God be pleased with him, said: 'Knowledge is negation (al-ma'rifa inkârun). Knowledge is obtained only through the negation of everything that is not the true object of knowing»[21]. Therefore the reality of everything is realized through its opposite. Knowledge of God, Mighty and Exalted, is ignorance of what is not Him. As long as you know through yourself what is not God, taking refuge, hiding, sheltering (from Him), you will not be one who knows ('ârif). You will only become so if you know Him through the denial of what is not Him. The servant does not know his Lord until all the objects of his knowledge have fallen away, except the knowledge of Him who is known by the Gnostics ('ârifîn).

As for what is handed down by one of the pious ancestors (salaf) (according to whom the Prophet) had said: «He who knows himself knows his Lord»[22]. This means that one cannot know one's Lord with the knowledge one has of oneself, but that only when one forgets oneself can one have knowledge of one's Lord. Abû 'Uthmân (al-Hîrî)[23] and Abû Turâb al-Nakhshabî[24] said: «He cannot know God who is ignorant of His dispositions (ahkâmiHi)». No one attains the

true reality of knowledge unless he knows His commandments; if one knows his Lord he knows His dispositions and decrees and does his best to be able to absolve them. Later the signs of sincerity will appear in him, and therefore he will belong to the rank of those who are sincere (sâdiqîn). Then he will become established in sincerity and will be one of those who confirm the Truth (siddîqîn)[25].

This one we have been talking about is among the envied stations (maqâmât al-ghibta). The Prophet said, God's blessing and peace upon him: «With God there are men who are neither prophets nor martyrs. The prophets and martyrs will envy them»[26]. One of the people of knowledge was asked about the meaning of the hadith: "How can the prophets envy them if they stay in a higher abode?" He replied: «Because the prophets are busy with the obligations of the transmission of their message and with the testimony towards the creatures. But they have not been charged with all this, and therefore nothing distracts them from God. For this the prophets will envy them, even if the state of the prophets is higher and more perfect.

When it is consolidated in the Station of sincerity - in the intimate knowledge of God, in the awareness of Him and in the ability to understand Him, in the permanence (baqâ') in Him through the extinction (fanâ') of what is not Him, in the reunion (jam') with Him, in separation from what is other than Him - (the aspirant) enters the domains of Union and Continuity (al-wusla wa-l-ittisâl) he will then be called "he who has reached True by separating from what is not Him" (wâsil bi-l-Haqq).

After it is reunited (with the True) it will then begin to travel the ninety-nine stations, which correspond to the number in the Names of the Most High True[27]. Each of those stations implies for the

traveler a state in which he is intimately related to one of those Names, and which will manifest His graces (barakât) upon him. That is the Name from which he drinks (mashrab), its source (mawrid) and its place of origin (masdar). Each of those stations covers him with its own light and splendor that is not comparable to the station that precedes it, after which he will arrive at the extreme limit (of his way). So far he has gone through all the stations and remains together with the True without station, no abode, no name, no form, no quality, no prayer, no sight, no vision, no question. He will be like what is remembered by one of them: «The servant is as if he never was, and the True is that which never ceased to be»[28].

One of them reported these words: «The Sufis are like children in the womb of the Truth». When one of them was asked about their qualities, he replied: "The True denies their qualities and governs them by His own."

From here on, the itinerant acquires authority in the science of hidden things ('ilm al-bâtin), which are the Secrets of the Truth that are revealed to those who are trustworthy among the saints (al-umanâ' min alawliyâ'). These secrets belong to the science emanating from God ('ilm al-ladunnî) and of which God speaks in the Koran describing it in these words: "And they came upon one of Our servants, to whom We had taught Our secret science (min ladunnâ 'ilm)» (Cor. 18: 65)[29]. This Science conquers whoever listens to it by subjecting him with a force that is proper to it, and does not impose on whoever is the inspirer of it either proof or demonstration (to convince the listener of what it affirms). Don't you see how Moses - Peace be upon him - remitted his judgments, precisely because of this secret science (of which al-Khidr was the holder)? This was despite the fact that Moses was better and more complete in spiritual status and station; this was because it was the knowledge that is

with God (al-'ilm al-ladunnî) that overwhelmed him, not al-Khidr's sight.

This science concerns the statutes of predestined things, which have not yet appeared in creation, and which the True wishes to manifest. They get knowledge (of these things) because of the purity of their innermost secrets, because of the potency of states and because they have extinguished their individual qualities. This is described in a saying by 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs[30], who stated: «God have mercy on 'Umar! He perceived God's decree from behind a thin veil»[31].

It is said that Abû Muhammad al-Jarîrî spoke to his disciples saying: "Is there anyone among you who knows what emerges from the hidden reality (min al-ghayb) before it appears (in the manifested world)?". They answered «No!». He then said: «Weep for those hearts that are distant from God»[32]. Al-Junayd also said this: «Truly, when the Truth wants the manifestation of a hidden reality, or of a decree from Its concealment, it arouses a presentiment in the intimate secrets of the elect among Its saints, so that they learn the unfolding (of the events) from invisible reality (before they appear in manifested reality). Those hearts are not distant from the divine presence, nor are they oblivious to the Truth, nor are they confused in the company of others from God.

After these states the traveler rises towards a state in which the importance of the miraculous graces (karamât)3[3] decreases for him. It is the moment of contemplation of the Exaltation (ta'zîm), of the Power (Jabarût) and of the Magnificence (kibriyâ') of God, when all else appears insignificant to him due to seeing the imperfection (of everything) in its apparent reality (bi-ibdâ'ihi 'alayhi), since in fact the receptacle of contingent beings (hawâdith) is never free from

imperfection. When he then contemplates the divine working (sun'), he will recognize it and will be attracted by it for the lack of any defect; but if he observes the place where the divine working is manifested, he will feel estranged from the vision of its imperfections. This is among the stations of the greater masters and the Princes of the Way; it is the moment in which opacity is mixed with purity and purity mixed with opacity. This moment is like when Mûsâ – peace upon him – turned towards the fire, and God spoke to him and communicated with him[34]. It is like when Âdam – peace upon him – turned towards the tree seeking eternal life (khulûd), and obtained from that desire only what made him move away from his abode and his station[35].

This is the moment in which permission is granted (to the wayfarer) for "hearing" (of the divine Word, samâ')[36], and for the intuitive unveiling (kashf) of its spiritual meanings. He is granted the honor of understanding what he hears, and in hearing and contemplating the meanings of what he hears, and in understanding all this, he attains closeness and nearness (taqrîb wa qurba). Blessed and Most High God said: "Verily in this there is a Warning for those who have a heart, for those who hear and see" (Cor. 50: 37).

This is the moment in which stillness (rawh) dwells in the depths of the being, perfume (rayhân) in the heart, light (nûr) in the inner secret and luminosity (diyâ') in the breasts. God Most High said: «If he is of those who are close to God (muqarrabîn), he will have peace and fragrance and Gardens of delights» (Cor. 56: 88, 89)[37]. The divine spirit brings relief to their intimate secrets (from the distraction) of creation, through union with the Creator. The perfume (rayhân) refers to the rest of their hearts, in God, from the beginning to the end of their way. The bliss of Paradise is their happiness in the nearness of their Lord and in His contemplation; and being free from what the people of Paradise are busy with, as God says: "Truly on

that day those destined for Paradise in joyous matters will rejoice" (Cor. 36: 55).

When the wayfarer has actually acquired these stations and will have known their reality with certainty, security (amn) will come to him by means of a divine inspiration (wahy)[38], or by the announcement of a prophet, or by the vision of a saint, or from the contemplation of invisible reality (ghayb), or from an inner discourse. God, Most High, said: «No! For the friends of God, no fear, no sadness!" (Cor. 10:62). This is like when the Prophet – God's blessing and peace upon him – announced to a group of Quraysh (that they would reach) Paradise; and he had said later, about Hâritha, when he had kissed his hand: «Verily I have listened to his recitation (of the Koran) in Paradise»[39]. He also said to Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allâh: "Verily God Most High spoke face to face (kifâh) with your father"[40]. In the same way he foresaw the degree of sanctity of Uways al-Qaranî[41], and many other such cases.

When God has led one of His servants to the station of the realization of Holiness (maqâm tahqîq al-wilâya) by truthful communication, the propensity to fear (khawf)[42] ends in him but the state of awe (hayba) does not leave him instead [43]. Those who hold these states belong to different degrees: there are those who are sent back from the state of fear to the state of apprehension (khashya), while there are those who, of a more noble condition, are sent back to the state of dismay (rahba). [44]; another of still nobler condition is deferred to the state of awe (hayba). This is because the receptacle of contingent beings (hawâdith) is never free from defects (despite the attainment of high spiritual states); but the servant is sent back (towards those states) because something of the principles of the favor of the True becomes overwhelming in him, and then his attributes dissolve. This is what God Most High - may He be glorified - remembered: 'And of pure purification We purified them: of the remembrance (dhikr) of the

eternal Abode! And they are among Us among the chosen ones the best!» (Cor. 38: 46, 47)[45].

The condition of one who holds such attributes is that in which these attributes are included in the (divine) Attributes, and the servant is freed from what were previously his peculiarities and characteristics of his nature. He speaks of the pure truth which he learned from pure Reality. But it is like a lightning that shines but does not last, because otherwise it would drive him out of his mind and destroy him. How many have gone mad with Love (hâ'im) and have been annihilated (in this state)!

Finally, when God has led one of His servants to these degrees, He welcomes him to the place of Proximity (ilâ qurbiHi) granting him the intimacy of His memory, making him a stranger to all other beings (aghyâr). It is possible that He then shows it to creatures as a model and refuge, towards which those who desire to come to Him turn, and that He makes its external reality appear as a sign of His mercy. If they failed (to attain) his science, character and spiritual discipline, then they would go astray in their path, fail their purpose, and enter the abode of deception; however, thanks to the lights of those exemplary models (a'immâ'), they will be enlightened, and by means of their teaching they will be guided on their way (sa'î) and led towards their goal.

(Those who have returned to the awareness of creation) are the guides of the People of essential Truths, the lords of hearts and spiritual abodes: (the wayfarers of the spiritual path) find refuge in them, in them they have the point of reference and in them they find shelter, just as the scholars of the law are a shelter for ordinary men in matters relating to the law. When God makes one of His saints

visible to creation, He lets temptation (fitna) fall from him, and he will neither be a deceiver nor will he be deceived.

Among them there are those who He keeps hidden from the eyes of creatures, from their gaze, from their hearts and from their secrets. These will live among other men as part of them: eating, drinking and talking among them. God has already allowed them to show their outer reality to creatures, but kept their inner state exclusively for Himself. No one perceives their state of inner perfection, while He is perfectly aware of it. This is because God is jealous, in fact, He is too jealous to allow anyone other than Himself to know His chosen servants[46].

If one of the saints visible to men makes a mistake because of a look or a word - but never a more serious mistake than this - the hidden saint will make him return to the right path. He can either reveal himself to him, to bring him back to integrity and assist him, or he can remain hidden, bringing him back to balance (thanks to the authority) of his inner gifts. Among the saints there is always a Pole (qutb) who watches over them[47]. The Pole brings those who deviate from the Truth back on their path, both thanks to their inner gifts and through their overwhelming authority. Didn't you see how (Abû Bakr) al-Siddîq - the most authoritative among the individuals of the Muslim community, after the Prophet Muhammad - brought everyone back to the right path, when they disagreed with him on waging war against apostates, so much that 'Umar (ibn al-Khattâb) had stated: «When God opened Abû Bakr's heart (orienting him) to war, I knew that that was the right way»[48]. Such is the authority of the saints made since him, from state to state and from station to station[49].

There can be no right epilogue of the journey through the spiritual stations, without a valid beginning; whoever has not founded his journey on the Koran and the prophetic Tradition (sunna) will have achieved, in the end, nothing of the intimate knowledge of God. If his beginning is solid, his conclusion will be solid. If the culmination of his journey is solid, he will be led from the Station of turning to God (iqbâl), to the Station where God turns to him, and then from the Station of approaching God (taqarrub) to the Station where God is close to him (qurb); from the Station of the choice made for himself, to the state in which it is God who chooses for him.

Happy announcement for this servant, for his state and his Station, for the magnificent rank and the high esteem with which God has honored him. His rank cannot be raised by anything other than by an increase in humility and submission, knowing that: "Verily whoever humbles himself before God will be exalted by God"; he is the one who humbly asks his Lord for elevation.

I ask the Most High God to grant us the gift with which He has elected His Saints and the People of Purity; not to deprive ourselves of multiplying His favor with the gift of the abundance of His Mercy. Truly He is the Neighbor, the one who welcomes the invocations.

Prayers and peace be upon our lord Muhammad and his family.

[1] According to the definition of one of the oldest teachers: «Sufi is the name given, now as in the past, to perfect saints and spiritual masters. One of them said: “Man sâfâhu al-hubb fa-huwa sâf, wa man sâfâhu al-habîb fa-huwa sûfiyyun; whoever has been purified by love is pure, and whoever has been purified by the Beloved (and has given

up all else) is a Sufi.' The name has no derivation which corresponds to etymological requirements, as Sufism is too noble to have any genus from which it could derive, since the derivation of one thing from another requires homogeneity (mujânasa). All that exists is the opposite of purity and things do not arise from their opposites. To the Sufis the meaning of the word Sufism is clear as the sun and does not need explanations or subsidiary indications... Purity is a manifest and resplendent idea and Sufism is the imitation of this idea" (Hujwîrî, Kashf, pp. 34-35).

[2] According to Sulamî the Way of Reproach consists in this: «Allâh brought about creation and embellished someone with the subtlety of His Lights, His contemplation, agreement with Him and what concerns Him. Instead, he placed someone else in the darkness of his soul, his natural tendencies and his passion. Those whom He has embellished are the Sufis, who show to creation the graces which Allâh the Most High has given them, embellishing themselves and divulging them, to then reveal to people the secrets of the True. Instead the "People of Blame" show to others what suits them, as regards religious conduct, behavior and natural activities, while keeping within themselves what belongs to the True and which has been hidden, without exposing it to anyone's gaze, nor give others the opportunity to access it and to evaluate its nobility and importance» (Risâla al-malâmatiyya, Italian transl. The Keepers of the Secret, p. 39).

[3] This is how Sulamî defines Love in another of her writings: «For everything there is an explanation except for Love, because Love has its explanation in itself, it is too subtle and noble for it to fit into a definition. For this God the Most High created angels for devoted service, jinn for power, demons for cursing, and created Gnostics for Love" (Sulamî, Introduction to Sufism, pp. 37-38) .

[4] See note 3, p. 109.

[5] See note 50, p. 65.

[6] See the commentary on this verse on pp. 108-109.

[7] The "emigrants" (muhâjirûn) mentioned in the Koran, were the first group of Meccan followers to follow Muhammad in the "migration" (hijra) from Mecca to Medina just before and after 622 AD. They severed all previous family ties and were taken in by the Muslims of Medina, the Ansâr. For the first sixteen months, the group of emigrants depended almost entirely on the hospitality of the Ansâr. In the commentary on the verse Sulamî recalls that the emigrants who abandoned all family ties and the security they guaranteed, to serve their Lord and obey the Messenger, disinterested in any other earthly and material affection, are indicated by God as the guides of the Gnostics ('ârifîn) and as a model for the education of Aspirants (murîdîn). Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 317.

[8] Fanâ' is currently explained as "the extinction of one's self and one's individual qualities" on the way back to God. In his treatise Qushayrî relates the concept of "extinction" (fanâ') to that of "permanence ” (in God) (baqâ'), and affirms that by fanâ' the Sufis (al-qawm) mean the dropping of deplorable qualities, and by baqâ' their replacement by praiseworthy qualities, through observance of the Law and devout practice at different stages of spiritual progress. Qushayrî, Risâla, pp. 39-40. According to a similar definition by Jurjânî: «Fanâ' is... sinking

into the incommensurability of the Creator (al-Bârî) and contemplation of the True (mushâhada al-Haqq)» (Kitâb al-Ta'rîfât, Beirut 1990, p 176).

[9] An essential feature of the method of spiritual realization of the Malâmatî, which Sulamî also describes in his other writings: «Those who bear this name (the Malâmatî) are people who have pledged themselves with Allâh to keep their inner "instants" (awqât) and keep your secret. They blame themselves for everything that may appear of their closeness to Allah and their worship. They show the creation what is ugly and hide the beautiful things, then creatures blame them for their appearance, while they blame themselves if they reveal something of their inner state» (Risâla al-malâmatiyya, Italian transl. The Keepers of the Secret, p. 23).

[10] In another of his writings Sulamî defines tawakkul on the basis of a saying by Yahyâ ibn Mu'âdh al-Râzî: «Tawakkul is of three types: the first is to stop complaining, the second is satisfaction with what is divided among men, the third is love. The first tawakkul is that of the devotees (sâlihîn), the second is that of the pure (abrâr), the third type is that of the Prophets (anbiyâ')» (Introduction to Sufism, pp. 57-58). An example of extreme tawakkul should also be noted in a well-known apologetic account, in the XXXV book of the Ihyâ' 'ulûm al-dîn of Ghazâlî, and which Qushayrî quotes in his Risâla, attributing its transmission to his master, Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî: Abû Hamza al-Khurasânî said: “One year I went on a pilgrimage. As I was walking, I fell into a well. I was torn between whether to ask for help or not, but I said, "By God I won't." I had just made this intention, when two men passed in front of the mouth of the well, and one said to the other: "Come, let's close the mouth of this well so that no one falls into it". They brought earth and reeds and covered the mouth of the well. I thought about shouting, but then I thought to myself: “Who to shout at? He is closer than those two,” and I was silent. After

a while something came that uncovered the mouth of the well and put down a leg, as if saying, "Stick on to me" with a kind of growl. I clung to that thing which pulled me out; I saw that it was a beast, which went away. Then a voice said to me: “Isn't it more beautiful this way, Abu Hamza? We saved you from danger with another danger”» (Ghazâlî, Kitâb at-tawhîd wa-l-tawakkul, Italian transl. The divine uniqueness and trusting Abandonment, p. 81). See also Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 87.

[11] It is the divine stratagem that tests the sincerity of the believer. According to a classic definition: «This term indicates, on the part of the True, the repetition (irdâf) of the benefit despite disobedience, the persistence of the spiritual state despite bad spiritual education (sû'al-adab), and the manifestation of charismatic graces (karâmât) without there having been any worthy effort (in the one in whom they manifest themselves)» (Jurjânî, Kitâb al-Ta'rîfât, p. 345). A general description of this problem posed by Islamic theology is in R. Brunswig, “De la fallacieuse prosperité”, in Studia Islamica, vol. LVIII, 1983, p. 5-33.

[12] See note 5, p. 43.

[13] This is Sa'd ibn Sallâm al-Qayrawânî, who lived for a long time in Mecca and was one of the most respected spiritual figures of his time. He emigrated to Nîshâpûr where he died in 983 AD Cf. Sulamî, Tabâqât, p. 479.

[14] The istidrâj is a trap, something that looks like a favor, while in reality it serves to deceive the soul. See note 11, p. 88.

[15] Reported Ibn Mâja, Tahâra 4; Dârimî, Wudû'2; Mâlik, Tahâra 36; Ibn Hanbal, V, 277, 280, 282. See Cor. 14:34: "If you were to count the favors of God, you would not be able to number them."

[16] The amâna to which Sulamî refers is the divine "deposit of trust", with which man was entrusted, but which instead the Heavens and the Earth refused to assume, as is clear from the Koranic verse: «We have proposed the Pledge to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains, and they refused to take it, and were afraid of it. But Man took charge of it, and Man is unjust and ignorant of every law!». This deposit has been variously interpreted as responsibility, free will, love, knowledge, etc. and corresponds to the khilâfa, the mediating function of man as Vicar of God on earth. The amâna makes man a lord over manifestation, his authority over creation is given by the presence in him of the supreme Spirit; however, it is a debt (dîn) which must be repaid to God on the day of Judgment. See on the subject G. de Luca, "Am I not your Lord?", in I Quaderni di Avallon 31, 1993, pp. 63-100 (in particular p. 68, and note 61); on the notion of the "cosmic" Caliphate of Man see also P. Urizzi, "Kingdom and Caliphate", in Perennia Verba, Rimini, 1999, n° 3; 2000, no. 4; 2001, no. 5; 2002-2003, no. 6-7.

[17] Bundâr ibn al-Husayn al-Shîrâzî (d. 964 CE) was authoritative in all four schools of law and was greatly honored by Abû Bakr al-Shiblî. On him see the biographical notes of Sulamî in Tabâqât, p. 467 and following, where the same sentence reappears. Also here as elsewhere, the word sûfî is related to the passive of the perfect third form of the verb "to purify", sûfiya, and is compared to other words with the same paradigmatic model: «The Sufi (sûfiyyu) is like what he is been healed ('ûfiya), that is to say that it was God who healed him ('âfâhu Allâh); as the one for whom God is sufficient (kûfiya), i.e.

God made himself sufficient for him (kâfâhu Allâh); as the one who has been rewarded (jûziya), i.e. God has rewarded him (jâzâhu Allâh). The Act of God reappears in his name». Ibid, p. 468.

[18] It is the art of recognizing the intimate reality of things from external signs. It is handed down from Qushayrî that Shaykh Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî said that he heard his grandfather 'Amr ibn Nujayd say: «Shâh Kirmânî was endowed with a penetrating perspicacity, he was never wrong, and he said: "Whoever looks away from forbidden things, he refrains from satisfying his passions, he engages his inner reality with spiritual vigilance and his outer reality with adherence to the sunna, and has the habit of seeking lawful food, the sharpness of his sight he will make no mistakes." Again Qushayrî recounts: "It is said that while Shaf'î and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan - God Most High have mercy on both - were in the mosque in Mecca, a man arrived and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan said: "By examining him I say that he is a carpenter ". Shâf'î said: "By scrutinizing him I say that he is a blacksmith". The two questioned him and he replied: "In the past I was a blacksmith, but now I am a carpenter"» (Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 116).

[19] Hadîth reported by Tirmidhî, Tafsîr, Sûra al-Hijr 16, and also quoted by Bukhârî in Ta'rîkh al-kabîr. See Sulamî, Kitâb al-arba'în fî-l-tasawwuf, in Majmû'e-yi âthâr-i 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî, p. 14. The same hadîth is reported by Qushayrî with a chain of transmission that reaches the author, through the same intermediary of Sulamî, Risâla, p. 115. See also Sarrâj, Luma', p. 118, and Kalâbâdhi, Ta'arruf, p. 59.

[20] The entire episode is reported in Sarrâj's Luma'. In fact, Abû Bakr, a trusted friend and father-in-law of the Prophet, said to his daughter

'A'isha, when, shortly before his death, he spoke to her of the inheritance that was due to her: "I leave you as a gift two brothers and two sisters". 'Â'isha did not immediately understand, for she, in fact, had only two brothers and one sister; but Abu Bakr possessed a slave girl who was pregnant and therefore later said: "It was inspired in my heart that the child in her womb was a female" (Sarrâj, Luma', p. 118). Episode also reported by Kalâbadhi, Ta'arruf, p. 59. See also Nabahânî, Jâmi' karâmât al-awliyâ', Beirut 1993, I, 128.

[21] Kalâbâdhî reports other words of Junayd, very similar to those quoted in the text: «For Junayd: “Knowledge is the observation of your ignorance, when His Knowledge appears”. He was asked: "Tell us more" and Junayd added: "It is Himself, at once the One who knows and the One who is known". The meaning is that you ignore Him as you and know Him as Him. This corresponds to this phrase of Sahl (al-Tustarî): "Knowledge is knowledge through ignorance"» (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 119).

[22] Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu. This famous sentence, often attributed to the Prophet himself (cf. Kashf al-khafâ', II, 262), appears continuously in the works of masters of a later period such as for example Ibn 'Arabî, who comments on it in various ways: «The Prophet he said: "He who knows himself knows his Lord", he did not say: "He knows the Essence of God", since the divine Essence possesses unlimited independence. How, then, can that which is limited know the Boundless? But the Lord requires a servant, no doubt, so there is a tinge of limitation in the Lord. For this reason creatures know their Lord» (Futûhât, III, 73. Cf. W. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge, Albany 1989, p. 177).

[23] Abû 'Uthmân al-Hîrî (d. 911 AD) was a native of Rayy; later he reunited with Abû Hafs, master of the malâmatî group of Nîshâpûr. See Introduction, p. 17-18; Sulamî, Tabaqât, p. 170.

[24] He was one of the most important masters of the Khurâsân group, renowned for his good character, nobility of conduct (futuwwa) and asceticism. He died in 859 AD About him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, p. 146.

[25] It is the highest degree of sanctity, pertinent to Abû Bakr, known as al-Siddîq, about which Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî said: «The last degree to which confirmers of the truth (siddiqîn) reach constitutes the beginning of spiritual states of the prophets; as for the last degree to which the prophets reach, its end is not conceivable" (Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 126).

[26] Part of a long hadîth reported by Tirmidhî, Zuhd, 35; Ibn Hanbal, V, 229, 239, 341, 342, 343. On the hadith al-ghibta see L. Massignon, La Passion de Hallâj, Paris 1975, vol. I, p. 109, and III, pp. 218-222.

[27] Regarding the ninety-nine Names of Allâh, see the beautiful treatise by al-Ghazâlî, Al-Maqsad al-asnâ fî sharh asmâ' Allâh al-husnâ. See also A. Scarabel, Prayer on the Most Beautiful Names, Genoa 1996.

[28] The same sentence appears in the Muqaddima of Sulamî and is attributed to Abû Bakr al-Shîblî (see Sulamî, Introduction to Sufism, p. 58).

[29] Verse of the "Sura of the Cave", the chapter of the Koran which contains the story of Moses and al-Khidr, the mysterious initiator of the great saints, who in the story instructs the prophet Moses, acting with him as a guide, and to whom Moses entrusts himself, not without hesitancy, like any aspirant. In the Sufi tradition, the episode from the Koran provides the paradigmatic model of the relationship between teacher and disciple, according to which the aspirant must totally abandon himself to the will and guidance of the teacher like "a corpse in the hands of the scrubber of the dead". Regarding what is defined in the verse as "Our secret science" (min ladunnâ 'ilm), Sulamî explains in his commentary that, according to Junayd's words: "By 'Our secret science' is meant what had been decreed for His Envoy (Moses), without there being any uncertainty or inconsistency in this. This science is realized concretely, even if it is based on the revelations of the lights that come from the hidden reality of the invisible world. It reaches the servant when he has forced his members to abandon all opposition, and has extinguished all will of his own in his movements, becoming a venerable guide (shaykh) in the hands of the True, without expectations and without desires" (Sulamî, Haqâ 'iq al-tafsîr, I, 414).

[30] 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (d. 687 AD) cousin and close friend of the Prophet, generally considered one of the first important scholars of Islâm, transmitted many of Muhammad's sayings (hadîth), many of which provided the material for the first commentary on the Koran (tafsîr).

[31] 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb (d. 644 AD) was the second Caliph of Islâm after Abû Bakr; in the decade following the Prophet's death he led the Muslims to conquer large regions of the Middle East. He is remembered for his intense devotion, scrupulous adherence to the Law, and authoritative personality.

[32] Abû Muhammad al-Jarîrî (d. 923 AD) was one of Junayd's most important disciples and also frequented Sahl ibn 'Abd Allâh al-Tustarî. On him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, p. 259. Qushayrî reports the same sentence as Jarîrî in the Risâla (p. 119), attributing its transmission to Sulamî, with a slightly different text.

[33] There are many anecdotes on the contempt of the sick saints for their own miracles. Hujwîrî relates that he heard Khwâja Imâm Khazâ'inî say: «In my youth I went to a certain place to pick mulberry leaves for the silkworms. About noon I climbed a tree and began to shake its branches. While I was thus busy, Shaykh Abû al-Fadl ibn al-Hasan passed by without seeing me; he certainly was absorbed and his heart was with God. hair! Is this how you treat your friends?" He didn't finish speaking when I saw the leaves, branches and roots of that tree turn golden. Abû al-Fadl exclaimed: "It is very strange, the slightest allusion makes me fall into error. One cannot tell You anything, not even to confide a little» (Kashf, pp. 227-228).

[34] It is the episode of the burning bush narrated in Cor. 20:10-48.

[35] Allusion to the episode of the Koran (20: 120-121) in which Satan tempts Adam by pointing him to the Tree of Eternity (shajara al-khuldi).

[36] This condition is similar to the one that Sulamî describes when speaking of the category of "receptors of intimate conversations (muhaddathûn)" (see supra n. 71, p. 75). More commonly, in the technical language of Sufism, the term samâ' describes the ritual

listening to Koranic passages and poems, often accompanied by musical instruments, which give rhythm to the invocation (dhikr) and dance (raqs) of the participants. Ever since it became habitual practice in Baghdâd Sufi circles in the 9th century, samâ' has aroused not a few suspicions in more orthodox circles, above all due to body movements, tremors, agitation of limbs and other phenomena that accompany states of ecstasy. It is still practiced by many Sufi brotherhoods to facilitate the attainment of spiritual states. Several classic manuals of Sufism devote at least one chapter to the defense of samâ' and the explanation of the ecstatic state. See Sarrâj, Luma', pp. 237-262; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 393-420; Kalâbâdhi, Ta'arruf, pp. 294-296. A definition contained in the work of Qushayrî, transmitted to the author by Sulamî, brings the origin of samâ' back to the dawn of human history. Junayd was asked: "Why does a man who is calm and peaceful, as soon as he starts 'listening' (alsamâ') get agitated?" He replied: "When God Most High addressed the progeny (of Adam) at the time of the primordial Covenant (al-mithâq al-awwâl) he said: 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied, “Yes, we attest to it!” (Cor. 7: 172). The sweetness of hearing the divine words disturbed the spirits, so that when they participate in hearing, their agitation comes from the remembrance (dhikr) of that event» (Risâla, p. 168). Elsewhere Sulamî deals extensively with samâ' and says, regarding the "hearing" of the Malâmatiyyas: «For them the "hearing" (samâ') produces awe (hayba) in the one who performs it, which if it is total prevents one from move and shout. I heard Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Khashshâb (the “timber seller”) relate that 'Alî ibn Hârûn al-Husrî had said: divine, of which the first consists in showing those present signs of fear, to the point that none of them is able to move, shout or get agitated, so complete is their fear. What actually happens to those who attend the "hearing" is that their inner experience prevails over that of those present and imposes itself on them, so that they remain under its dominion and its order" (Sulamî, Risâla al-malâmatiyya, trad. it. The Keepers of the Secret, p. 47).

[37] Al-muqarrabîn is a term that indicates “the approximate” among the servants of God, a category which also includes angels and archangels. Entering the lexicon of Sufism, the term indicates the elect at the top of the spiritual hierarchy. Sulamî also repeats the same type of sentence in his commentary on the Koran: "The quiet for their hearts, the perfume for their souls, the gardens for their bodies" (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 303).

[38] A verse from the Koran says: «To no man God can speak other than by Revelation (wahy), or behind a veil, or send a Messenger who reveals to him with His permission what He wants» (Cor. 42: 51). The term wahy is usually translated as "revelation" and consistently refers to the message that God reveals to a prophet. In the particular case of Muhammad, God: "He revealed to His servant what He revealed (fa-awhâ ilâ 'abdiHi mâ awhâ)" (Cor. 53:10). Completely different is instead the word that is used in the language of the Sufis to define the inspiration proper to a saint, which is instead ilhâm. It would therefore seem improper for Sulamî to use the term wahy in relation to a saint, even one of high spiritual realization. However, it should be remembered that the Station of Proximity (maqâm al-qurba) is, for many authors, including Ibn 'Arabî, the place of the highest degree of the hierarchy of saints, which is therefore also called the Station of Prophecy -lawgiver, or of the "prophecy of the saints". Only the Afrâd, another name for those belonging to the category of "close" saints (muqarrabûn), have access to this station. See on the subject M. Chodkiewicz, Le Sceau des Saints, Paris 1989, pp. 69-77, 142; D. Gril, “Le terme du voyage”, in Les Illuminations de la Mecque, Paris 1988, pp. 323-347; A. Sirhindî, The Beginning and the return, Milan 2003, p. 27; Y. Friedmann, Profecy Continuous, Aspects of Ahmadî Religious Thought and its Medieval Background, Berkeley 1989, pp. 94-101.

[39] Hâritha ibn Nu'mân al-Ansârî, of the Khazraj tribe. He was part of the "People of the Veranda" group. Ibn Hanbal (III, 106) reports this saying of the Prophet: "I entered Paradise and I heard someone recite (the Koran) and I asked: 'Who is this?' I was told: “Hâritha ibn Nu'mân”».

[40] Part of a long hadîth reported by Tirmidhî, Tafsîr sûra Âl 'Imrân 4; and by Ibn Maja, Muqaddima 13; Hâkim, IV, 110. Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allâh al-Ansârî (d. 693 AD) of the Khazraj clan of Medina, joined the Prophet together with his father 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Amr, who died in the battle of Uhud (625 AD).

[41] Uways al-Qaranî (d. 640 or 657 AD), was an ascetic of Kûfa who belonged to the Second generation (tâbi'ûn), despite having lived in the time of the Prophet. In fact, although he had never met him in person, he knew him well and had provided his physical description to 'Umar and 'Alî, who tracked him down years after Muhammad's disappearance, in 'Arafât, during the Pilgrimage.

[42] Khawf , fear, in one of Ibn 'Arabî's definitions, «It is that which alerts you to something detestable in the future». Al Jurjânî, Kitâb al-Ta'rîfât, p. 294. A sentence of Kharrâz is handed down, «The majority of those who fear, fear God for themselves, have pity for their souls, because they want to save them from the order of God, Mighty and Exalted» (Sarrâj, Luma', p. 57).

[43] Hayba is the state following fear (khawf), it is the condition that occurs due to the effects of the manifestation of divine Nobility and Beauty in the heart. See S. al-Hakîm, Al-Mu'jam al-Sûfî, Beirut 1981, p. 1122.

[44] For Ibn 'Arabî the term rahba can mean the intimate dismay at the instability of knowledge (rahba al-bâtin li-taqallub al-'ilm). See Jurjânî, Ta'rîfât, p. 193.

[45] Sulamî explains in his commentary on the Koran, that what purifies is the vision of the Essence of Truth (dhât al-Haqq). See Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 189-190.

[46] The paragraph perfectly describes the spiritual condition of the Malâmatî. In another of his writings Sulamî quotes the words that one of the Sufis said about it: "They are people intimately close to Allâh, Who keeps their secret and hides them behind the curtain of external appearance". They asked Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî: "What is the most important sign of the connoisseur?" He said: «It is that you see him eating with you, drinking with you, joking with you, selling you something, buying you something, while his heart is in the realm of holiness. This is its most particular sign» (Sulamî, Risâla al-malâmatiyya, Italian transl. The Keepers of the Secret, p. 25).

[47] The Pole (Qutb) is the saint at the top of the esoteric hierarchy, his identity is secret and he belongs to the group of Afrâd, the "solitary" among Muslim saints; he exercises his governing action in a purely spiritual way. The Pole is always chosen from among the ranks of the Malamati. See on the subject, Ibn 'Arabî, The mystery of the Keepers of the World.

[48] A similar version of this hadîth is reported by Ibn Hanbal, III, 76.

[49] The channels of diffusion of Muhammad's legacy and his spiritual influence are mainly two: the one that comes through the Imâm 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib, who crosses and gives life to the majority of the great brotherhoods, and the one that comes through Abû Bakr al -Siddiq. The paths of initiation that arrive through the latter concern in particular three of the most important Sufi orders of Central Asian origin: the Naqshbandiyya, the Bektashiyya and the Yasawiyya. The malâmatî imprint is evident in all three orders. See S. Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam, Oxford 1971, p. 149.

EXPOSURE OF THE SPIRITUAL STATES OF THE SUFIS

Bayân ahwâl al-sûfiyya

In the Name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

Know - may God grant you His favors - that Sufism originates from the "People of the Veranda" (ahl al-suffa)[1], that is, those who perfectly followed the rule of the Messenger of God - upon him God's blessing and peace. They were like guests of the early Muslims, and the Prophet sat and conversed familiarly with them. He is the excellent model of the Sufis.

The "People of the Veranda" included the poorest of the emigrants, and the Messenger of God - upon him God's blessing and peace - called them "the poor emigrants" (sa'âlîk al-muhâjirîn)[2].

They were poor just as God describes them in His Book, when He says: "[Let the spoils be distributed also] to the poor emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and possessions [because they sought God's favor and His satisfaction, and they rushed to the aid of God and His Messenger. It is they who are truly truthful!]" (Cor. 59:8). The verse therefore clarifies that they were not looking for a family, nor riches, nor something specific (ma'lûm), since they relied only on what came to them, without asking, without having desired it; they only sought God's grace in the life of this world, and His satisfaction in the life to come.

The Most High still describes them in His Book when He says – His mention is exalted -: «[And you will give] to those poor people who are totally committed to the way of God [so much so that they cannot travel the earth to trade. The ignorant consider them rich, for their dignified modesty, while you will recognize them by the sign that distinguishes them. They do not ask people insistently]" (Cor. 2: 273). (With these words) the Most High means that they "totally committed themselves" to putting His commandments into practice, "so much so that they cannot walk the earth", or wander around for fun or pleasure. "The ignorant consider them rich" because of the rigor of their honesty ('affâf) and the pride with which they live their condition of poverty, and does not recognize them. In fact they cannot recognize them, and they cannot recognize their path (tarîqa), except those who hold the same rank as them and walk the same Path. They recognize them "by the sign [that distinguishes them]" which is that of devoted servitude ('ibâda). And in fact, while the Prophet - God's blessing and peace upon him - sits among them in full familiarity, they do not wear patched (muraqqa'a) or colored clothes, "they do not ask people insistently", since being satisfied with what has been granted to them, their language can be exempt from asking who owns it. And how could their tongue beg who is a mere servant?

The Prophet - God's blessing and peace upon him - sat among them with familiarity to the point that a leader of the Arabs said to him: "Send those servants of God and those poor people away from you, so that we can sit next to you". . He - God's blessing and peace upon him - was troubled on hearing those words and God Most High revealed to him the following verse: "Do not reject those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, for the desire of His face" (Cor 6:52). He also revealed to him: «And let not your eyes turn away from them for desire of worldly beauties» (Cor. 18: 28)[3]. Then the Prophet stood up - be upon him the blessing of God and peace - sat down with them and said: "Thanks be to God, He has been kind to

me, and has made me sit with those of my nation (umma), in life and in death»[4].

This is the way of Sufism, and that is why they, the Sufis, wanted to call themselves "Poor (in God)" (fuqarâ'). Thus were, in fact, the Companions of the Veranda, and the Sufis see in them their origin and their model. In their poverty they have numerous rules of spiritual conduct (adab); we want to mention a few here.

Among the rules and obligations of poverty, there is placing oneself under the guidance of one of the guides of the group of initiates (qawm) and making one's character conform to her virtues; follow the prophetic tradition (sunna) in deeds, words and spiritual states; avoid innovations (bid'a)[5] and the company of innovators; not wearing a particular dress to stand out among the people, so that one's condition of poverty is noted; not sitting in an assembly to make one's needs known; to fear for one's poverty more than a rich man fears for the end of his wealth; to accompany people only on condition of safety (from temptations) ('alâ shart al-salâma); ask at all times from one's soul what is most worthy for it, so that you may get tired of it, while others get rest from it; don't count on what is guaranteed and don't be upset about what is not there; knowing how to distinguish the kindnesses to which one is the object, and not accepting them if they do not come from what calms the heart, or only because there is apparently an advantage or because one entrusts oneself inwardly; look at the merits of creatures while observing their imperfections. Respect the spiritual teachers, honor the brothers and be compassionate with the companions, support them and do not disturb them, keeping in mind their judgments about you and never judging them. Do not neglect supererogatory religious practices (nawâfil) and do not neglect the precepts of the prophetic tradition (sunan)[6]; in performing the obligatory precepts of worship (farâ'id) to concentrate one's spiritual aspiration (himma)

so that the religious duty (farîda) is performed in spiritual presence and awe; learn of religious science what is indispensable for the fulfillment of religious obligations; turn kindly first to one's companions and endure the annoyances they may cause; be lenient in judgments with your brothers, but severe with yourself. Leave aside what does not concern us and take care of what concerns us; do not seek the company of young people and avoid groups of women; do not associate with those who disobey (God) only out of ambition, and do not feel at ease with those who want this low world only because of their courtesy. This is what we have recalled on the subject of poverty, its rules of conduct (âdâb), the way of conducting the fuqarâ' and their spiritual path.

Then God Most High – may He be glorified and His mention exalted – goes on to speak of those who have been assisted in receiving (the poor emigrants) with kindness saying to them:

"Those who dwelt in the House and in the Faith before them, [love those who emigrated to them and feel no need in their hearts for what has been given to them, and prefer those to themselves, even if they are afflicted with want ; and those who will beware of the avarice of their soul, those will be the Fortunate]" (Cor. 59: 9). This is the peculiar quality of young knights (fityân) and their spiritual path, which consists in welcoming the poor, offering their person and their possessions, and in preferring them to themselves (îthâr)[7]. This is the first of the spiritual abodes of Sufism: spiritual poverty, the scarce consideration for this low world and the departure from it.

In Sufism four things are indispensable: good manners of spiritual conduct (adab), moral virtues (akhlâq), efforts in devotion (mujâhadât) and spiritual states (ahwâl). Good manners are

acquired, moral virtues and devoted efforts are a consequence of adhering to the sunna, spiritual states are gifts that come from God Most High. The good norms of spiritual conduct are numerous, I will cite only one as an indication, from which the other aspects can then be deduced: contempt for one's soul. In fact, I heard my grandfather[8] say: «He who values his soul more than anything else, gives little importance to his own faults».

(Among the good manners of adab) is renunciation (takhallî) of this low world, forbidding the soul to pursue its aims, resisting passion and keeping away from ambiguous things; and again perseverance in silence, the renunciation of seeking concessions (rukhas)[9], frequenting the markets as little as possible, refraining from asking questions, abandoning expressions such as "I" or "we", and subjecting one's spiritual states to the examination of the Holy Book and the sunna.

Among the moral virtues: goodness of character, generosity, humility, forbearance (ihtimâl), standing with satisfaction in the face of legal precepts (ahkâm), and reducing disagreements with brothers to a minimum.

Among the devout efforts there are: the obligation of supererogatory religious practices (nawâfil), constancy in fasting, praying a lot at night; protect the gaze, tongue and hearing from transgressions; sincerity of intention in obedience, steadfastness of heart in prescribing good and forbidding evil (al-amr bi-l-ma'rûf wa-lnahy 'ani-l-munkar), and other such things.

There are three spiritual states: renunciation (zuhd), scruple (wara'), trusting reliance on God for what concerns the necessities of life (tawakkul), unconditional acceptance of God's will (tafwîd), humility (khushû'), calm resignation (taslîm), sincere intention (ikhlâs), certainty (yaqîn), fear (khawf), hope (rajâ'), contentment, and so on.

With regard to the "allowed facilitations" (rukhas) typical of Sufism in what Sufi practice requires, there are: wearing the patched dress (muraqqa'a), the fuwat[10], the mystical concert (samâ') and the movements that are carried out; the shouts, the enthusiasm and the company. These are the "allowable facilities" of Sufism, so these are lawful things for them. Of all this we will speak at length later, in due course and in the appropriate ways.

Finally (I will treat) of the states of Sufism on which the spiritual leaders of the Sufis have pronounced themselves and of which I will now recall the sentences; those who know how to reflect will be able to intuit their way and their spiritual aptitudes.

Abû Sulaymân al-Dârânî[11] said: «A Sufi is one who purifies himself from the obfuscation of this lowly world, from sins and acts of disobedience».

I heard Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrâhîm[12] say: «I heard Abû 'Alî al-Thaqafî[13] recount that when Sarî al-Saqatî[14] was asked for a definition of Sufism, he replied: "Sufism is a name that has three meanings: it means one in which the light of knowledge does not extinguish the light of scruple; he who does not speak of an inner aspect of Science which contradicts the literal evidence of the Holy Book and the sunna; the one who does not consider the miraculous

graces, which God Most High grants him, a reason to tear apart the curtains of His interdictions"".

I heard Abû Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allâh al-Râzî[15] relate these words of Abû 'Abd Allâh al-Qûrâshî: «Sufism is based on ten spiritual stations (maqâmât), of which the first is to reduce all ties with this lower world rather than multiplying them. The second is to found the heart on God without relying on secondary causes (asbâb). The third is the desire to perform voluntary acts of obedience and supererogatory religious practices when one is in good condition. The fourth, patience for having lost (something of) this low world, and indeed rejoicing for it, without going to ask others. The fifth, leave the choice to others when you are with fellow travellers. The sixth, to attend to the orders of God Most High, without dedicating oneself to any other occupation. The seventh, the silent mention of the Name of God (al-dhikr al-khafi) above all other mention[16]. The practice of sincere worship (ikhlâs) even when the whisper of the evil one (waswâs) intervenes. The ninth, to be united strictly with certainty (yaqîn) and instantly stop complaining. The tithe, tranquility for having placed one's trust in God and peace of heart in His remembrance (dhikr Allâh)».

I listened to al-Husayn ibn Yahya al-Shâfi'î say that he heard Ja'far al-Khawwâs[17] report the following words of al-Junayd: «A Sufi is one for whom not even a moment passes without regretting the 'next instant'.

I heard Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrâhîm al-Sûfî say: «I asked 'Amr al-Zujjâjî about Sufism and he replied: occupy the heart with what is most right in that given moment".

Abu Hafs was asked about Sufism and he replied: 'Let you not rejoice when this low world comes to meet you, and do not grieve when it turns its back on you; don't make it so important that it brings you joy or suffering."

I listened to Abû al-Husayn al-Fârisî[18] say that he heard al-Jarîrî[19] utter the following words: «The beginning of Sufism is purity (safâ') and the end is loyalty (wafâ'); (…)[?]»[20].

From Ahmad ibn Masrûq:[21]

If you are certain that it is your Lord the Sustainer

and ask the creatures,

then you are one who has no certainty.

And if you doubt the providence of which God has made himself guarantor

then you are not a believer.

Said one of them:

Don't confuse me with what you see of my outward form:

pearls are also hidden in the shell.

I'm dressed again, though my dress is ragged,

where the dress ends, the vanity ends.

Said one of them:

The impiety of those who do not believe in God

increases with his wealth.

The devotee's faith without a dirham

increases with his poverty.

There is no good in him who is without understanding:

lays its feet on its own worth.

From Makhzumi:

The young man you met is not a Sufi

and on him a woven garment of misfortune,

patched up in black and white pieces

as if it were a piebald crow.

Since Sufism is a common dress,

in which the young man fears God and humbles himself.

From Yahyâ:[22]

Every beloved except God is superfluous;

only pains, afflictions and sorrows.

After each loved one comes another,

but after the Merciful no one comes anymore.

Love has signs, when they show,

the lover is recognized.

Whoever is captured by love has an afflicted heart,

he always complains, moaning and suffering.

He has no other thought than for God, for none other than Him.

Reason errs, if one is conquered by God.

Disheveled head, hungry belly,

pale in the face, tears in the eyes,

always reminding those who love what they love,

the extreme rank of the nobility.

If he devotes all of himself to love for Him,

the nobility comes to dominate him from an illness

which was getting serious.

He gives battle in the mihrâb lamenting his distress

and stand before God, his master,

standing before Him, righteous, passionate,

intent on reciting the verses from the sacred pages,

now bowed, then prostrated, weeping flowing tears

that come to earth,

love is made to reach the heart,

where the true seed of God's love is, and recognizes it,

then with the palm of the hand he begins to make Love sprout

like a plant,

and catches its scent and its fruit.

Surely this is the love for those who wed for Him

and not for a house full of possessions, amusements and gifts.

No, and not even for Paradise, he does not pay attention to it.

No, not even for the hurì in the lofty halls[23].

Abu Bakr 'Abd al-Hamîd al-Mû'addib said:

He who has only two rags is radiant,

the world has nothing to fear from him.

He pays no attention to the rich and owns nothing of his own.

If he swears something to God he keeps what he swears.

Said Mahmûd al-Warrâq:[24]

Who reveals the secrets that have been confided to him

communicating them explicitly,

as long as he lives they will never again entrust him with secrets,

they will turn away from him and he will not enjoy their company,

in exchange for intimacy they will give him solitude.

They do not choose who divulges their secret:

those who love them beware of this!

He said: it is written on the tomb of Ibn Mubarak:[25]

Death is a sea of overwhelming waves,

where the swimmer's energy is overwhelmed.

It does not keep the man in the grave company.

If not the fear of God and his good deeds.

And he said:

Put your assets into what really matters;

and when one is near splendid patience,

well, that's the best way.

Do not neglect proper spiritual education (adab)

against those who are small:

when he raises his lament,

the wise feel pain.

And leave the big one alone, given his status:

in fact, he has too much vainglory to behave with adab.

Do not accompany those who are suspected of indulging in turpitude,

because being close to such people is a cause for uncertainty:

for know that to draw near to him

it can infect, as it infects scabies.

And who rejoices in the beautiful gift,

then he falls into sadness if misfortune overtakes him.

Whoever is alone with God does not humiliate the powerful ruler, and whoever entrusts himself only to Him does not harm any human being.

The best of men is he whose passion does not corrupt his religion, and whose doubt does not invalidate his certainty.

The best of men is he who scrutinizes his own imperfection, and is blind to the imperfection of others.

The miser wants to hoard his own wealth, but in reality he is only the treasurer of his heirs.

Whoever obeys God will be exalted and elevated, and whoever rebels against Him will be despised and humbled.

There are three days of which time is made: the past day that will never come back for you; the day you are passing away; and the future day, which you don't know if it will be for you or against you[26].

[1] The "People of the Veranda" is the name given to a group of ascetics who gathered in front of the Prophet's house in Medina, coming from the most disparate places to participate in the spiritual life of Muhammad's house. They lived on the charity of the house and the hospitality of the first Muslims of Medina; they were so called because they usually sat on a bench under a veranda at the entrance to the house. They are spoken of as the first Sufis, due to their poverty and the asceticism that distinguished them, and due to the particular consideration that the Prophet had for some of them. The group included some of the characters who will later have a fundamental rank, as witnesses of the life of the Prophet, in the transmission of hadîth, the prophetic sentences, a fundamental cornerstone of Islamic law and theology. Among them the most famous were 'Abd Allâh ibn Mas'ûd, who was the keeper of the Prophet's personal belongings, Abû Dharr al-Ghifarî who came from a tribe of marauders, Abû Hurayra, so called because of his attachment to a kitten; among them he was the one who handed down the greatest number of testimonies. Then Salmân al-Farsî, a barber of Persian origin who had come from the East, after being warned of the appearance of a Prophet among the Arabs. See on the

subject Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 81; M. Lings, The Prophet Muhammad, pp. 171-173.

[2] Al-Muhâgirûn or the first Meccan Muslims who moved to Medina from Mecca during the period from before the migration (hijra) of Muhammad until the conquest of Mecca in the year 630 AD See note 7, p 85.

[3] According to some commentators these two verses would have been revealed on the occasion of the arrival of some notables of an Arab tribe in the mosque of Medina; among them was also Uyayna ibn Hisn, chief of a tribe of the Ghatafân. They, wanting to convert, came before the Prophet, but remained apart, and did not want to approach the group of companions who occupied the back of the mosque. There were, in that group, some of the "People of the Veranda" (ahl al-suffa), including Salmân al-Farisî and Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî who, being very poor, wore a heavy woolen cloak (sûf) and they perspired, so that a smell came from them like that of sheep when the rain catches them. The notables asked Muhammad to leave his companions to join them, but the arrival of the verse prevented the Prophet from moving. Qurtubî, Al-Jâmi' li-ahkâm al-Qur'ân, Cairo 1950, X, 390-392, and Muhammad TA Pânîpâtî, Al-Tafsîr al-mazharî, Lahore 1991, IV, 29. In his commentary on the verse 18: 28 the author reports a sentence of Wâsitî according to which the meaning of the words could also be: «Do not take your eyes away from them by turning them elsewhere, for they do not take their eyes away from Me even for an instant» (Haqa 'iq al-tafsîr, vol. I, p. 409.) The episode is reported in part by Kalâbâdhî, Ta'arruf, p. 58.

[4] It is not possible to go back to the sources of the hadîth mentioned. The Arab editor suggests a similar version of the hadîth contained in

the Sunan of Abû Dâwud, 'Ilm 13; another version, similar to the two, also appears in the Jâmi' li-ahkâm al-Qur'ân of Qurtubî, X, 391, without indications of any kind.

[5] Religious innovation, or bid'a, is one of the things most detested and opposed by Islamic orthodoxy. According to one of the many hadîth referring to this question, the Prophet had decreed: «Any innovation extraneous to our teachings will be rejected», Nawawî, Arba'în, 5. Some manifestations of the most popular Sufism, such as certain extreme ascetic practices, or some extravagances of the spiritual concert (samâ'), were precisely in that period (9th century AD) indicated with suspicion by some of the more orthodox jurists who condemned them as innovations; they then extended this condemnation to the rest of the practices and doctrines of Sufism. Sulamî, like Kalâbâdhî and others, is one of those authors who has contributed to changing this judgment, demonstrating, just as in this case, that the doctrines professed by the Sufis were perfectly in conformity with orthodox Islam.

[6] Sunan (pl. of sunna), supererogatory practices of conformity to the prophetic example that Sufis in particular are required to carry out scrupulously.

[7] The verse, immediately following the Koranic passage quoted at the beginning of this treatise, is quoted and commented here with a direct reference to îthâr, the characteristic spiritual practice of the Futuwwa, the spiritual "cavalry", the movement that gathered in its organizations the young bachelors and the artisans. This practice consisted in always preferring others to oneself, through concrete action and devoted service (khidma), in favor of the poor and weak. In fact, Sulamî explains in his commentary on the Koran, in the

margin of the verse in question: «Abû Hafs (al-Naysâbûrî) said that preferring others to oneself (îthâr) means putting the happiness of your brothers before your own happiness, in the things of this world and in the Hereafter" (Haqâ'iq al-tafsîr, II, 318-319). The first to speak of the Futuwwa defining it as "the way of preeminence of action over words" was precisely the shaykh Abû Hafs al-Haddâd al-Naysâbûrî (d. 874), one of the first fityân of the Khurâsân, who was also among the founders of the Malamatiyya movement. On him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 115-122, and also his Introduction to Sufism. Also L. Massignon, “The Futuwwa or 'Pact of artisan honour' between Muslim workers in the Middle Ages” in Parola data, Milan 1995, pp. 369-395.

[8] Abû 'Amr Ismâ'îl ibn Nujayd al-Sulamî, maternal grandfather of our Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân, who dedicates a chapter of his Tabaqât to him, pp. 354-357, where he mainly reports numerous sayings and moral sentences.

[9] The so-called "facilitations" (rukhas, sing. rukhsa) are lightening of the ritual permitted by religious law in particular conditions which can provide a justification; for example, being on the road during the month of Ramadàn allows the traveler to be exempt from fasting, only to recover the lost days, and to "shorten" the ritual of the canonical prayer. For Sulamî and many others, these concessions concern the common believer, but not the Sufis.

[10] Fuwat sing. fûta, according to EW Lane's lexicon are strips of cloth that are wrapped around the hips, which are not of Arab origin but originating from Sind.

[11] Abû Sulaymân 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn 'Atiyya al-Dârânî, a native of Dârayyâ, near Damascus, died in 215 H., about him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 75-82; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat, IX, 254; Qushayrî, Risâla, p. 16; Hujwîrî, Kashf, p. 112.

[12] Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Abû al-Husayn al-Fârisî (d. 980 AD), disciple of Fâris ibn 'Isâ al-Dînawarî (d. 956); he was Kalâbâdhî's teacher and one of Sulamî's biographical informants. It is best remembered for being one of the links in the hallâjana tradition.

[13] Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhâb, Abû 'Alî al-Thaqafî (d. 940 AD), is described by Sulamî as one of the noblest teachers of Nîshâpûr, leader (imâm) of numerous religious sciences. See Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 361-365.

[14] Abû al-Hasan Sarî ibn al-Mughallas al-Saqatî (d. 867 or 871 AD) the first great Sufi of Baghdâd, where he lived almost never leaving his house. He was Junayd's uncle and was the first of his teachers. Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 48-55; Qushayrî, Risâla, pp. 9-10.

[15] Also known to the Sufis as Ibn Shâdhân al-Râzî. He was a wanderer and during his travels he collected many Sufi sentences that Sulamî reports in his Tabaqât. He died in Nîshâpûr in the year 397 H..

[16] The dhikr, the fundamental rite in the practice of Tasawwuf, is of two types, the one practiced aloud, or "dhikr of the tongue", and the silent one, called "dhikr of the heart". A characteristic of the malâmatî tradition is precisely the practice of silent dhikr. This practice is widespread among the Naqshbandî and in other Sufi

orders, in fact an important master of the Shâdhiliyya affirms: «The essential reality of dhikr is to remove distraction, in it there are degrees: the first is the dhikr of the language, of which we have evidence in the Qur'an and the sunna. Therefore, brother, the dhikr of the tongue is necessary for you to obtain and be honored with the dhikr of the inmost heart (jinân)» (Ahmad ibn 'Ajîba, Îqâz al-himam fî sharh al-Hikam, Cairo 1982, p 103).

[17] Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Nusayr al-Khawwâs al-Khuldî, Sufi of Baghdâd, one of the first disciples of Junayd and Abû al-Husayn al-Nûrî, died in 348 H.. He was one of the Sufis most hostile to Hallâj and approved the sentence. On him see Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 434-439; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat, X, 381-382; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 156-157; Qushayrî, Risâla p. 30.

[18] See note 12 p. 115.

[19] Abû Muhammad al-Jarîrî, disciple of Tustarî and Junayd. See Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 259-264.

[20] The text available to us presents at this point a line with an unintelligible meaning, probably due to a copyist's transcription error. Moreover, the word hakadha (in square brackets in the Arabic text) indicates that even the Arab editor did not understand the sentence, given that something like "...follows him first with four legs, of which the last is the loyalty," words for which one cannot imagine any meaning.

[21] Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Masrûq al-Tûsî lived and died in Baghdâd in 911 AD; he had masters such as Hârith al-Muhâsibî and Sarî al-Saqatî.

[22] Perhaps it is Yahyâ ibn Mu'âdh al-Râzî, a Sufi of the Khurâsân school, who lived in Balkh but died in Nîshâpûr in 911 AD. On him Sulamî, Tabaqât, pp. 107-114; Abû Nu'aym, Hilyat, X, 51-70; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 122-123; Qushayrî, Risâla p. 17.

[23] Literally: min fawqa ghuraf, allusion to Cor. 25:75: "These will be rewarded with the Exalted Halls of Paradise."

[24] Mahmûd ibn al-Hasan al-Warrâq the poet, most of his verses celebrated renunciation and good manners. He was a slave trader by trade; died during the Caliphate of al-Mu'tasim (833-842 AD).

[25] 'Abd Allâh ibn al-Mubârak, a Sufi native of Khurâsân who lived in Irâq, died in 181 H. on his return from a military expedition. Cf. Abû Nu'aym, Hilyat, VIII, 162; Hujwiri, Kashf, pp. 95-97.

[26] In a final note, the editor of the Arabic text states that the last part of the text is hardly attributable to Sulamî, above all because of the heterogeneous style of the sentences, substantially extraneous to our author's usual way of expressing himself. For this reason, he concludes, this copy of the Bayân ahwâl al-sûfiya is to be considered faulty.

Glossary of Arabic terms

'ârif (pl.'ârifûn,'ârifîn): the gnostic 1, 2 n.68, 3 n.7, 4

'ilm al-'ubudiyya: the science of servitude, 1

'ilm al-ma'rifa: the science of Gnosis, 1

'ilm al-rabbaniyya: the science of Dominical Reality, 1

'ilm al-yaqîn: the science of Certainty, 1

'ilm: science, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 n.44

'ubûdiyya: the condition of servitude, 1

'uzla: isolation, 1

adab: spiritual good manners, 1, 2, 3 n.11, 4, 5, 6

Afrâd: the Solitary, 1, 2, 3 n.39, 4 n. 5

ahkâm: the legal statutes, the decrees, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

ahl al-salâh: the people of integrity, 1

ahl al-suffa: the People of the Veranda, 1, 2 n.3

al-'ilm al-ladunnî: the knowledge that proceeds from God, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

al-ghayb: the hidden Reality, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Al-Haqq: The True (name of God), 1, 2 n.7, 3 n.68, 4 n.8, 5, 6, 7 n.45

al-khusûs: the elect, 1

Al-Mujîb: He who hears (name of God), 1

al-nafs al-ammâra bi-l-sû': the soul that incites evil: 1, 2 n.6, 3 n.38

al-nafs al-lawwâma: the soul that blames, 1, 2

al-nafs al-mutma'inna: the pacified soul, 1, 2 n.6

al-nafs: the soul, 1, 2, 3 n.3, 4 n.38, 5, 6

Al-Samî': He who hears (name of God), 1

amâna: the repository of divine trust, 1, 2, 3

arfâq: the company, 1

asbâb (sing. sabab): the secondary causes, 1, 2 n.7, 3 n.14, 4

awrâd (sing. wird): the initiatory litanies, 1

baqâ': permanence (in God), 1, 2, 3 n.8, 4

baraka: the blessing, 1

bast: relaxation, 1, 2

bid'a: innovation, 1

dhawq: spiritual taste, 1

dhikr: the recitation of the Name of God, 11, 1, 2 n.4, 3 n.7, 4, 99-100 n.36, 5, 6

dhikr-i khafi: silent recitation of the Name of God, 1, 2

dirham: silver coin 1, 2 n.72, 3

diyâ': brightness, 1

fanâ': annihilation (in God), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 n.38

faqîr (plur. fuqarâ'): poor, ascetic, 1 n.3, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 n.52, 7, 8, 9 n.70, 10, 11, 12

faqr: poverty, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

farâ'id--the obligatory precepts of worship, 1

firâsa: intuitive sagacity, 1, 2

fitna: the temptation, the disturbance, 1

futuwwa: chivalrous virtue, 1, 2, 3 n.4

fuwat (sing. fûta): strips of cloth that are wrapped around the hips, 1

ghafla: negligence, 1

ghinâ': wealth, self-sufficiency, 1

hakim: the wise, 1

hâl (pl. ahwâl): the spiritual state, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,

haqîqa (pl. haqâ'iq): the Reality, 1, 2, 3 n.10, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 n.68, 10

haqîqat al-ma'rifa: the Reality of Knowledge, 1

hayba: awe, 1 no.36, 2

hikma: wisdom, 1

huzn: sadness, 1

huzûz (sing. hazz): participation, pleasure, 1

ightirâr: the illusion 1

ihtimâl: forbearance, 1

ikhlâs: the sincerity of worship, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

ilhâm: inspiration, 1, 2 n.38

imâm (pl. a'imma): model, spiritual guide, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,79, 7, 8 n.33, 9 n.49, 10 n.13

irâda: the will, 1, 2 n.43, 3

istidrâj: being astray by degrees, 1, 2

istighnâ': contentment (in God), 1, 2

îthâr: altruistic sacrifice, 16-17, 1 n.4, 2, 3

Jabarût: the World of Might, 1, 2

Jâhiliyya: the age of ignorance, 1

juhd: the effort, 1, 2 n.47

kalâm: the theological discourse, 1 n.33, 2

karâmât (sing. karâma): the miraculous graces, 1, 2, 3 n.11, 4

kashf: the intuitive unveiling, 1

khalwa: the spiritual retreat, 1

khawf: awe, 1, 2 n.68, 3, 4, 5 n.42, 6

khidma: devoted service, 1 no. 23, 2, 3, 4 no. 7

khirqa: initiatory garment, 1, 2 n.4, 3 n.7

khulûd: eternity, 1

kibriyâ': the magnificence (of God), 1

kufr: disbelief, 1

ma'rifa: the knowledge, 1, 2, 3

malâma: the blame, 1 n.6, 2, 3, 4, 5

maqâm (pl. maqâmât): spiritual station, 1, 2 n.9, 3 n.40, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

maqâm al-hurriyya: the station of Liberty, 1

maqâm al-qurba: the station of Proximity, 1, 2, 3 n.39, 4 n.38

maqâm al-shuhadâ': the station of the Martyrs, 1

maqâm al-siddîqîn: the station of the True Ones, 1

maqâm al-tawba: the station of Repentance, 1, 2

maqâm al-wusla: the station of the Union, 1

maqâm dhâtî: station of the divine essence, 1 n.69

mu'âmala: the ritual action, 1, 2

muhaddath: hearing inspired speeches, 1

mujâhada: spiritual effort, 1, 2

mukallam: who participates in intimate conversations, 1

muqarrabîn (muqarrabûn): the close ones, 1, 2 n.39, 3, 4 n.37

murâd: one who is desired (by God), 1

murâqaba: inner vigilance, 1, 2

muraqqa'a: the patched dress of the early Sufis, 1, 2, 3

murîd, (plur. murîdîn, murîdûn): the one who desires (God), the aspirant, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 n.38, 6, 7, 8, 9 n. 10, 11, 12 n.7, 13

murshid: the spiritual guide, 1

mushâhada: contemplation, 1 n.38, 2, 3 n.8

nawâfil: supererogatory ritual practices, 1

nubuwwa 'âmma: general prophecy, 1

nubuwwa al-tashrî': law-making prophecy, 1

nubuwwa--the prophecy, 1

nûr--the Light, 1

qabd: contraction, 1, 2

qadâ'--the divine decree, 1

qalb: the heart 1, 2 n.3, 3, 4

Qutb al-Aqtâb: the Supreme Pole, 1

Qutb: the Pole, 1

rahba: the dismay, 1

rajâ'--hope, 1, 2

rasûl (pl. rusul): the envoy, 1, 2

rayhân: the perfume, 1, 2

ridâ': satisfaction, 1 n.7, 2

risâla: the law-making mission, 1

riyâ'--hypocrisy, 1

riyada: devoted exercise, 1

rubûbiyya: the divine Lordship, 1

ruh--the spirit, 1, 2

rukhas (sing. rukhsa): the facilitations in the ritual, 1, 2, 3

sabr: patience, 1, 2, 3

sadaqa: the voluntary bestowal, 1

sâdiqîn (sing. sâdiq): sincere men, 1

safâ' : purity, 1, 2

salaf: the pious ancestors, 1, 2

samâ': mystical hearing, 1, 2, 3, 4

shafaqa: compassion, 1

sharî'a: the religious law, 1

shawq: the burning desire, 1

shaykh (pl. shuyûkh, mashâykh): the spiritual master, 1, 2, 3, 4 n. 5, 6, 7, 8, n.7, 9 n.21, 10, 11, 12, 13 n.18, 14 n.29, 15 n.33, 16 n.7

siddîqîn (sing. siddîq): the truthful men, 1

siddiqiyya: the condition of Truthfulness, 1, 2 n. 3

silsila: initiatory chain of transmission, 1, 2, 3

sirr (pl. asrâr): the intimate secret, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

suhba: the company, 1, 2

sunan: the traditional ritual prescriptions, 1, 2 n.6

sunna: the prophetic Tradition, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 n.18, 7, 8, 9 n.6, 10, 11, 12 n.16

tab': instinct, 1, 2

tafakkur: meditation, 1

tafwîd: entrusting oneself to God, 1 n.37, 2, 3

talbîs al-hâl: the dissimulation of inner experience, 1

tarîqa (pl. turuq): the way, Sufi brotherhood, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

tasawwuf: Sufism, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 n.16

taslîm: perfect submission, 1, 2, 3

tawakkul - trusting entrustment to God, 1, 2, 3, 4

tawfiq--divine favor, 1

uns: intimacy, 1, 2

wahy: the Revelation, 1, 2

walî (awliyâ'): the intimate friend of God, the saint, 1, 2, 3, 4

wara': devoted scruple, 1, 2, 3

waswâs: the suggestion of the evil one, 1, 2

yaqîn: certainty, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

zuhd: la rinuncia, 1, 2, 3, 4

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